LADY SILVERDALE'S SWEETHEART,

And other Stories.

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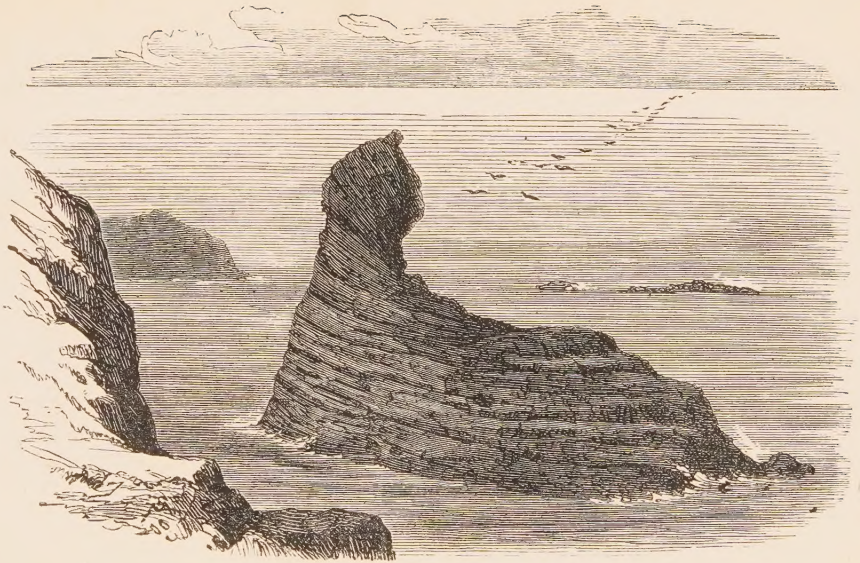
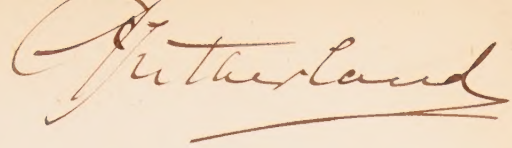


Sphinx-like Rock near the Butt of Lewis.

See page 315.



LADY SILVERDALE'S SWEETHEART,

And Other Stories,

BY

WILLIAM BLACK,

AUTHOR OF "A DAUGHTER OF HETH," "A PRINCESS OF THULE," ETC., ETC.

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*** Of the following Stories the majority are reprinted from various sources, with some additions. "Lady Silverdale's Sweetheart" appears for the first time.

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LADY SILVERDALE'S SWEETHEART.

CHAPTER I.

FIVE-AND-THIRTY.

A BRIGHT, mild, and genial day in February; a frail sunshine glimmering through the thin blue mist hanging about St. James's Park; the light catching here and there on the lake, and the green shrubs, and the yellow piebald bark of the plane-trees—suggesting, altogether, one of Corot's tender, shadowy, spectral landscapes. A lady and her son were walking briskly along the Mall—it was a day that invited even the aged and infirm out of doors. This lady wore a tight-fitting grey Ulster coat, a Rubens hat, and a standing-up collar; but although there was enough that was "mannish" in her attire, there was nothing of the kind in the expression of her face, which was singularly refined, and even beautiful. She had pale, fine features; large grey

eyes, full of brilliancy, under dark lashes; she had beautifully cut lips, perhaps looking all the redder for the paleness of her face; and she had abundant masses of golden hair, tightly braided under that picturesque hat. This was Lady Silverdale. She was thirty-five years of age; with her slender figure, her erect carriage, and the bright cheerfulness of her face, she did not look more than twenty.

She was walking hand-in-hand with a small boy of eight or nine, who had eyes like her own, but whose hair, flowing down on his shoulders, was even lighter than hers. She was carrying a small parcel which she had purchased in St. James's Street.

"Harry," she said to him, as they got opposite Buckingham Palace, "do you remember your Uncle Frank?"

"A little, mamma."

"He is coming back to England now; and he will come and see you; and you must tell him how glad you are to have your dear uncle back again."

"I am not glad, mamma; and I hope he won't come and see us," said the young gentleman frankly.

"Why?"

"Because he is a bad man, that wants to kill the Queen, and give our house, and my pony, and all that we have, away to the beggars."

The mother looked amazed.

"Whoever put such nonsense into your head, child?" she demanded.

"Maudey read it in the newspapers," said he.

"Maudey must have been making fun. Maudey has no business to read the newspapers, and talk about what she does not understand. I suppose she was giving you lessons in politics. Now mind, Harry, when your Uncle Frank comes to see you, you must be very kind to him, and love him very much, and you must forget all that silly nonsense that Maudey has put into your head."

Harry received these instructions with meek obedience; but he was not convinced. This Uncle Frank—who was really a cousin of Lady Silverdale's, but had received a courtesy title from the children—had been away from England for something like two years and a half; and Harry had no particular remembrance of his many acts of kindness. On the other hand, the loyal young Englishman was determined, before he quite made friends with his homecoming uncle, to receive a distinct assurance that he had never meant to kill the Queen or confiscate any person's pony.

These two walked carelessly on until they reached a house on the south side of Belgrave Square, which they entered. A couple of letters, just arrived,

were still lying on the hall table; and Lady Silverdale took them up and turned into the dining-room that she might read them. But this spacious and lofty room, with its simple and old-fashioned furniture, was not very well lit in the day-time; and so she walked up to one of the two windows, that she might see to read her letters. She had not opened one of the envelopes when her attention was distracted by the driving up of a hansom; at the same moment she saw a tall, well-built, yellow-bearded man jump out of the cab. Lady Silverdale thought no more of her letters. She heard the bell ring, and swift as lightning she flew to the dining-room door.

"Mitchem," she said, to the man who was about to answer the summons, "where are the young ladies?"

"In the drawing-room, m' lady."

"Show this gentleman into the library."

"Yes, m' lady."

Then she retreated into the dining-room again; and felt compelled to put aside her Ulster there, and to take off her gloves, for the heat of the place seemed to stifle her. Nevertheless the slender, fair woman, now dressed all in black, looked pale and cold; and her hands were trembling.

Meanwhile Mr. Frank Cheshunt had been shown

into the library, which was immediately behind the dining-room, and there he stood, hat in hand, looking out of the window at a somewhat dismal panorama of stables and back-gardens. He was a good-looking man of middle age, not quite so flabby of face as most Englishmen of his type of physique become at forty. Moreover, he had just returned from wandering over the wild places of the earth for over a couple of years; and his ordinarily fair complexion was plentifully browned.

He turned as the door opened, and advanced to meet his cousin. She looked a little frightened, and there was less than usual of that sparkling colour in her lips; but all the same he could not help being struck—even he who knew her so well—by the singularly youthful and almost girlish grace of this woman. They shook hands rather distantly.

"I am glad to see you are quite well, Mary," said he, affecting a business-like air. "I was afraid you might be down at Woodley. Did you get my letter?"

"Yes," she said, but she did not look him in the face. "Sit down, Frank. Oh, yes, I got your letter. I suppose you have just arrived?"

"Last night. I left Venice a day earlier than I had intended."

"You have been a long time away."

"Yes, it seems a long time to me now," said he, taking care not to stare her out of countenance. "I —I got the news in Japan—I—I was very sorry for you, Mary."

Then the pale face flushed; and she somewhat nervously took up a paper-knife that was lying on the table, and began to bend it. He was sorry he had mentioned that painful circumstance so soon; he should have waited until the first chill of the meeting had gone off. He noticed her embarrassment, and endeavoured to retrieve his blunder by shifting the subject altogether, and by talking in a light and cheerful strain.

"Do you know," said he, "that during the whole of the four months I was in South America, and more particularly when we were going up the Amazon, I was haunted by an extraordinary delusion—a fancy—a sort of dream. Whenever I lay awake at night, I could not help believing that somehow, when I got up in the morning, I should see Woodley Place right opposite my window; and I should not have been surprised if I had suddenly found myself again fifteen or eighteen years of age. All these later years of my London life seemed to have gone—to have been worth nothing at all; and I had a sort of notion that I ought to go out and

ask old Higgins for his gun to shoot the blackbirds in the kitchen-garden. Do you remember the awful damage I once did to the fig-trees?"

She smiled; there was a brighter look on her face now.

"And the time I shot one of Higgins's pigeons, mistaking it for a jay in the twilight?" he said.

"Oh, yes," she answered quickly.

"And the first time your father would let me have a turn at his rabbits—"

"When you lay three hours in a sheep-trough—"

"And the time you fell into the pond—"

"That was all your fault, Frank."

"And then that dell up by Coney-Bank, where there were such quantities of blue-bells and primroses in the spring—"

"Yes," she said, with gathering spirit, "and the dread we had of it after night-fall, because of the packman—"

"And do you remember that squirrel I gave you —that bit one of the servants one night at prayers, and made him squeal out—and your father getting into such a rage, and declaring I had set him at the man—"

"I believe you did, Frank."

Her face was radiant. The old days had come back. They were boy and girl together; making

mischief in the dairy; sitting opposite each other in the great, damp-smelling family pew; fishing for sticklebacks in the ponds; gathering violets by the hedges and in the woods in the sweet, fresh spring-time. Surely this could not be the woman who was mother of two daughters about as tall as herself?

"Ah, well!" said he, with something of a sigh, "I began to look on all that as having happened only yesterday; and I was sure when the morning came I should get up and look out on the old park, and the ponds, and Woodley Church up on the hill. I—I was glad to forget the intervening years—they had not been very pleasant for me."

She remained silent; but her breath came and went more quickly.

"I wonder," said he, looking at her, "whether one could get quit of a period of one's life by refusing to think of it—whether one could forget—"

He rose, and went forward to her, and took her hand in his.

"Mary," said he, "is it too soon to speak?"

She rose also, and she did not withdraw her hand until she had answered him.

"I don't know, Frank," she said, in tones so low that he could scarcely hear; but then she raised her beautiful wet eyes to his, and said, with evi-

dent emotion, "If I can make up to you, Frank, for all you have suffered—and if you will forgive me for all that is past—I will do what you please."

He kissed her on the forehead, without speaking.

Then a low, booming sound was heard outside in the hall, increasing in volume, followed by a pattering of feet on the stairs.

"You must see the girls, Frank: you will stay and lunch with us, will you not?"

He did stay; but he was rather silent during lunch-time; for he was occupied in studying the faces of the two young ladies and their brother—though he had known them for years—in order to prove to himself that all three were singularly like their mother, and had, in fact, no trace of resemblance to anybody else in their features, voice, or manner.

CHAPTER II.

AN OLD STORY RE-TOLD.

Everybody "in society"—and the much larger number of people outside who take a strange interest in the family affairs of persons of title—knew familiarly the romantic story connected with Mary Cheshunt, subsequently Lady Silverdale. It was a very old story, to be sure, and a very common one; but it contained those simple elements of romance which have gone to the making up of many thousands of books and plays. Mary Cheshunt was the only daughter of a well-to-do Nottinghamshire squire, whose younger and much poorer brother was a rector just over the borders in Lincolnshire. This clergyman had a son, Frank Cheshunt, who, as a boy, spent a great part of his holidays at Woodley Place, the house of his uncle, and had for his chief companion and playmate his cousin Mary. That was all very well in the days of bird's-nesting and

pony-riding; but it became very different when young Cheshunt, home from Cambridge, betrayed a high appreciation of something else at Woodley Place besides his uncle's hares and pheasants. In fact, the two cousins fell over head and ears in love with each other before they themselves found it out; and it was only when John Cheshunt, consulting with his wife, came to the conclusion that their nephew Frank was too frequent a visitor at the Place, and decided to give him a hint to that effect, that the two young people declared themselves to each other, and swore that nothing on earth should part them. However, John Cheshunt and his wife had come to a contrary resolution. Frank was an exceedingly nice young fellow; and he promised to make his way in the world; but all that he could have from his father, the clergyman, was a thoroughly good education, and a pittance of a couple of hundred a year or so. Then the young Lord Silverdale, who had just succeeded to the title, and whose spacious woods and forests adjoined the humbler coverts of Woodley Place, had, in his silent and solemn way, betrayed a considerable regard for his neighbour's daughter, and always accepted invitations to Woodley Place, though it was well known that he never visited, and considered dinner parties an intolerable nuisance. All these things led up to a climax; then there was

much weeping and passionate imploring, and secret vows of constancy; after which Mary Cheshunt was carried off by her parents to Florence, and her cousin did not even hear a word of her for many a day.

Mary Cheshunt was not a heroine. If the course of true love had run smoothly, she would doubtless have married her cousin, and made him a good wife. But this was impossible; she could not think of disobeying her father and making her mother wretched; Silverdale, with all his silent solemnity, and his premature baldness, which looked odd in a man of eight-and-twenty, was a highly worthy and respectable young fellow; and it would be nice to have a town house in Belgrave Square. When the Cheshunts, having remained some months in Florence, started for the Nile, Lord Silverdale accompanied them; and the next thing that Frank Cheshunt saw or heard of them was a statement in a morning paper that a marriage had been "arranged" between his rival and his faithless cousin.

Of course, he flew into a series of violent frenzies; at one time vowing to himself that he would go and shoot the man who had stolen his sweetheart's love from him; at another declaring ruthless war with the perjured aristocracies of all countries; at another resolving to write a book that would hold

the mirror up to heartless women and cause them to blush—if any shame were left in them—at the picture of their own meanness, and cruelty, and corruption. Happily for himself, he had his living to work for; and these wild schemes were unable to struggle against the immediate pressure of actual facts. He had come up to London from Cambridge with a fair reputation for ability, and he was busily reading for the Bar—not with a view to practice, but that he might be qualified to accept from the Government one of those appointments which the Cheshunts of Woodley had a fair right to claim as the reward of many years' devotion to the Conservative interests of the country. So he turned with a sick heart to his books again; and tried to forget his false love.

A year or two went by; the newspapers told him that Lady Silverdale was here, there, or elsewhere; but he had never seen her: the newspapers, too, were beginning to talk about him—occasionally and briefly. He had got called to the Bar; but he had suddenly forfeited all his chances of political patronage from the party then in power by joining an informal association of what were at the time known as "Aristocratic Radicals," and becoming one of their most vehement speakers and pamphleteers. Some of those young noblemen and gentlemen had

a mild way of toying with revolution over their claret, and spoke of barricades in the same breath with blue china; while having been compelled by the higher criticism to give up revealed religion, they had consoled themselves with a gentle deification of the British workman. But there was no *dilettante* mildness about Frank Cheshunt's professions of faith. When, in the pages of some review, the initials "F. C." were discovered, most readers who busied themselves with politics knew what to expect —keen and trenchant English—a trifle rhetorical, perhaps, with the enthusiasm of youth; a frank insistance on following out theories to their logical conclusion; and an indignant protest against the political apathy of the English people. It was no use laughing at this man; he had to be answered; and he was strong enough to make people angry. His enemies, on the other hand, were rejoiced to see that he could not get into Parliament, though he tried one or two boroughs where his friends declared he was safe. He had no money; and the somewhat noisy crowds whom he harangued at public meetings appeared to have no votes. At all events, he cut a poor figure at the poll; and the scorners had their will of him. "In my distress I called upon the working-man,"—this was the substance of their jibes,—"but there was none to answer me."

In the intervals of this busy, eager, active life he had his fits of despairing Wertherism, kept carefully sacred to himself. Those men who met him every day had no idea of the well-spring of sentiment that kept bubbling up within the heart of this hard-hitting, keen-speeched man; but all the women, of course, knew how he had been jilted, and judged by his conduct in society that he never meant to marry. Sometimes, sitting alone by himself at night, he would go back to the old days, dream for a while, and then seek refuge in Alfred de Musset or Heinrich Heine. Grief seemed more bearable when it was put into musical words. And if there was a terrible agony in Heine's picture—

Das war ein lustig Hochzeitfest,
Zu Tafelsassenfroh die Gäst',
Und wie ich nach dem Brautpaar schaut,
O weh! mein Liebchen war die Braut,

there was some proud remembrance in these lines of De Musset's—

Je me dis seulement, 'À cette heure, en ce lieu,
Un jour, je fus aimé, elle était belle.
J'enfouis ce trésor dans mon âme immortelle,
Et je l'emporte à Dieu!'

while sometimes—but very rarely—some wild, hope-

less, passionate wish of his heart startled even himself—

O that 'twere possible,
After long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!

He never doubted for a moment that Mary Cheshunt was still Mary Cheshunt—that the grown woman must have been the perfect fulfilment of all his boyish dreams. She was still to him the one woman in all the world. There was no other; there could be no other. A blue-book was about as interesting to him as the faces of the women whom he saw.

He met her—by accident. He was at the foot of a steep and narrow staircase, and he was trying to make his way up through a crowd of men and women in order to shake hands with his hostess, and then get off to his club. At length he managed to gain the landing; and there before him—looking at him with rather a frightened, pitiful face—was his cousin. The wrench his heart got then was known to none. She might have been an acquaintance of yesterday to whom he said,—

"Oh, how do you do, Lady Silverdale?"

He did not offer her his hand; but she put out hers.

"I am so glad to see you, Frank," said she, with superb composure, but with a wistful entreaty for kindness in her eyes. "Let me introduce you to my husband—"

"I have met Lord Silverdale before," said Cheshunt, as the silent man with the black hair speckled with white tufts bowed.

She made him promise to call and see them; and this he did, for he began to grow ashamed of his Wertherism, and thought he could do nothing better than make the friendly acquaintance of the Silverdale family, children included. But it was only an acquaintance, kept up perforce. He knew very little of Lady Silverdale. He could see that she was a fashionable woman, and had ways and manners different from those to which Mary Cheshunt was given; but she was still to him Mary Cheshunt.

His attention, however, was carried away from these sentimental fancies to more practical matters. There was a man called Alexander Thompson, to whom a kind Providence had given a constitution capable of withstanding the climate of the Gold Coast—a fact which promised well for his comfort anywhere else, whether in this world or the next. Thompson was one of a small handful of merchants, for whose exclusive benefit the British Government maintained one of the most unhealthy settlements

on that unhealthy coast—sending out its servants, civil and military, to be buried there, or invalided home with the seeds of fever and dysentery ineradicably implanted in their systems. The place was of no manner of use to us; the settlement, notwithstanding the exertions of the Wesleyan missionaries, had most thoroughly demoralized the adjoining tribes; it was hopelessly insolvent, and its chief export to England was sick officials demanding pensions. But it had plenty of exports for other parts of the world; and the handful of merchants waxed fat on their profits.

When Mr. Alexander Thompson returned to England, one might have thought he would be grateful for what the Government had done for him. Most Scotchmen, it is true, are born Radicals, the national constitution not having as yet been mellowed by a few centuries of roast beef and port wine. But then it is as fairly to be supposed that Thompson, having made a large sum of money, would, on returning to England, prefer the respectability of Toryism; or, at the very least, profess himself a reformer until he had gained entrance into the most comfortable club in London, and then have sunk into the gentle Conservatism which is the prevailing political feeling within that institution. Strange to say, Thompson showed himself as fierce

an opponent of all governments as any Irishman who has been six months in New York. Nothing but rank Communism would do for him—theoretical Communism, that is to say; for of course a man who had worked hard for a fortune could not be expected to share it among the poor. He bought for himself a big house in Palace Gardens; he had it luxuriously furnished; and he gave elaborate dinners to those young men—mostly younger sons, it is true—who were vastly discontented with existing institutions. He acquired a pretty taste of his own, too, in the way of luxury. A lady once asked him where he got a certain very beautiful service of dinner glass, as she was anxious to have some of the same; to which he replied that, wishing to have this service unique, he had had the moulds broken. The theory of Communism, one sees, has its limitations in practice.

Now Mr. Thompson betrayed a very special liking for Frank Cheshunt. More than one of the revolutionary Honourables who frequented the house had rather a trick of standing with their back to the fire after dinner and silently staring through a single eye-glass; whereas Mr. Thompson had a particular dislike to being stared at through a single eye-glass. Frank Cheshunt he found to be a plain-spoken, thorough, and altogether earnest fellow; and at last

he swore by all the gods that had ever been worshipped on the Gold Coast or elsewhere that he would get Cheshunt into Parliament, if money would do it. We know quite well that money cannot. Mr. Thompson had doubtless formed a commercial view of English public life while supplying the Africans with fierce spirit and sham cotton fabrics. Sure enough, however, Frank Cheshunt got into Parliament.

To sit below the gangway on the Liberal side of the House was at that time to be identified with the pulling down of park-railings and other wicked actions; and there was a good deal of strong language being used here and there. When Cheshunt by accident stumbled into one or other of these journalistic controversies, he generally managed to give as hard knocks as he got; but this only proved him to be all the more a dangerous person. It was no matter for wonder, therefore, that Lady Silverdale's eldest daughter, puzzling her small head over stray references in the newspapers, had arrived at the conclusion that her Uncle Frank was a desperate character, who wished to kill the Queen and confiscate everybody's property. A great many folks in society, however—and these mostly of the gentler sex—took a more kindly view of the young man's Radicalism. It was all, according to them, the

result of his having been thrown over for wealth and a title; and although they did not blame Lady Silverdale severely for having followed her parents' wishes, they considered his remaining unmarried as rather a touching spectacle—the spectacle of the traditional jilted but faithful lover.

To wind up this hurried sketch of the history of these two people previous to their meeting formerly described, it only remains to be added that two important events happened in Frank Cheshunt's life within the same year. Mr. Thompson died, leaving him a very considerable fortune; and he lost his seat in Parliament. He then took it into his head that he would travel; and it was in Japan that he learned from a newspaper which had been sent him that his old sweetheart had become a widow. He did not go post-haste back to England. He waited until two years of her widowhood had expired; and then, as we have seen, he drove up to her house in Belgrave Square in an ordinary and prosaic hansom.

CHAPTER III.

RÉCHAUFFÉ D'AMOUR.

Very speedily all the world got to know, or to guess, that Lady Silverdale was about to marry her cousin—her sweetheart of former days; and it was considered that now their romantic story had reached its proper end. But however little romanticism remained in the heart of Frank Cheshunt—who was now a tall, robust, yellow-bearded Englishman of eight and thirty years of age, who had seen a good deal of the world and had his share of interest in public life—he did not at all look at the matter in that light. He determined that, so far as he was able, the long interval which had separated him from his love of early days should be a blank. They should both ignore that hapless time and all its associations. They were to start a new life together, and forget the past. He was ready even to give up England for her sake, if she for his sake would do as much; and

then they might go away to some distant home, by the side of a blue lake, and there, content with each other's society, learn to think no more of the time during which they had been separated than if it had been a dream. It is perhaps needless to point out that these vague aspirations were but the incipient signs of retrospective jealousy—one of the most perilous of the passions.

To his surprise and regret he found that his beautiful sweetheart was far less imaginative and romantic than himself. She did not at all care about being married at once and leaving England, just as the London season was about to begin. But she did not precisely tell him that she preferred another London season to the early enjoyment of his society by the side of that far blue lake. She represented that any undue haste on their part would shock their friends. Then there was a great deal to be done about sending Maudey and her sister to a school at Dresden. Finally, it was necessary to guard against any disrespect to the dead—and here, of course, Frank Cheshunt at once, and in awkward silence, gave in. After all, he loved his cousin; and he was sure that her tender heart would tell her what was right.

But he grew—during these few months of waiting—to hate the circle of friends and acquaintances in which she moved. They conspired, with great kind-

ness, to bring these two together; but then they continually talked of matters relating to that long period which he had resolved to ignore; appearing to be far better acquainted with Lady Silverdale than himself. They led his cousin, too, into all sorts of fashionable foibles; and dragged her about; and induced her to talk frivolity just like themselves. If he had not known Mary Cheshunt, he would have said that Lady Silverdale was an ordinary, empty-headed woman of fashion, who was exceedingly pretty, and dressed well when her dress did not happen to be a trifle too pronounced. He was sure, indeed, that this was not the proper atmosphere for his beautiful bride-elect. Mary Cheshunt had never been a popinjay. When should he be able to carry her off to those calm and peaceful solitudes where the heart could speak freely without risk of being ashamed?

He was all the more ready to make this sacrifice on his own side—if it could be considered a sacrifice—from the fact that he had but recently returned from two years' residence abroad; and he had not had time to resume much interest in English public affairs. In fact, there was little doing at the time. The leader of one political party had gone off in high dudgeon to fell trees and write for magazines, leaving his followers somewhat bewildered; the

leader of the other party, finding his opponents without a policy, and himself therefore unable to appropriate it, was quite content to wait. Certain outsiders, it is true, were anxious to put into the pauperized peasant's hand something he could give in exchange for the blankets, port wine, and Christmas puddings received from the squire's wife and the parson—that *quid pro quo* being a vote; and the squire and the parson were not much alarmed by this proposal, for they knew very well how they could use that vote against a party which was supposed to be directing a baleful eye on the National Church. Neither the lowering of the County Franchise, however, nor Disestablishment was near enough to awaken much interest; and Frank Cheshunt found his afternoons at the Reform Club chiefly taken up with playing whist. He could have left England at that time with little regret.

As it was, he consoled himself with the hope that when once he had got his sweetheart clear away from all old associations, he would make her life so happy that she would be well disposed to remain wherever he pleased; and in the meantime a great deal had to be done to make this plan possible. Happily, Lady Silverdale had already, before seeing him, resolved to send her two daughters to Dresden; but it required an infinite amount of argument and

persuasion to convince her that the young Lord Silverdale ought to be sent to live with Frank Cheshunt's father, the old clergyman having kindly undertaken to coach the boy for Eton. At last she did consent; and another obstacle was then removed. But what did she mean by never speaking of the neighbourhood in which they were to live when they returned from their wedding-tour? Did she suppose for a moment that he, Frank Cheshunt, was coming back to live in that house in Belgrave Square, or even at Woodley Manor? His face burned at the very thought of it. But whatever she may have thought—or forgotten—he was happily absolved from the necessity of taking and furnishing a house, which would have been a desperate encumbrance in the event of his persuading her to remain with him at Ouchy.

At length the time drew near when they were to be married; and it was necessary to make arrangements for their wedding trip. It was at this point they had their first quarrel—or something approaching a quarrel—for Lady Silverdale insisted on taking her maid, an old servant of the Silverdale family, with her. Cheshunt, with great gentleness and affection, remonstrated; then, finding that she persisted, grew indignantly angry.

"How could I travel without her, Frank?" her

ladyship pleaded. "I have never travelled without her—"

"Gracious heavens!" he said, "how do other women travel without a maid, then?"

"I should lose all my things—"

"Cannot I look after your luggage?"

"She knows everything, and she has been everywhere with us—"

"Not with *us*," said he, with bitter sarcasm; driven to speak of a subject which he ordinarily avoided as if it were poison. "You forget, Mary. I have not the pleasure of the woman's acquaintance. I should consider her a nuisance—an impertinent intrusion—why, on a man's wedding trip, to be haunted by some old fool of a woman—"

Lady Silverdale rose.

"I am sorry to hear you use such language, Frank. Holmes is a most respectable person; and she has always been treated with the greatest consideration by my husband's family."

He was rather a hot-tempered man.

"When I asked you to marry me, Mary," said he, "I did not undertake to marry your late husband's family, and his man-servants, and his maid-servants, and the confounded number of asses within his gates. So you had better consider the matter."

He took his leave; and she, cold, and silent, and

proud, merely bowed to him as he went out. He went up to the club, read an evening paper, yet saw nothing on the page before him; played a rubber at whist, and made two revokes, which called down on his head a fair amount of bad language. Then he dressed, and dined by himself—choosing a small table so that no one should be able to sit down with him. He was to have met Lady Silverdale at a party that evening; and he was resolved not to go near the place; but if he was not going, why had he taken the trouble to dress?

Lovers of eight and thirty and five and thirty have happily more common sense than younger persons; and this quarrel was easily made up. Lady Silverdale was pacified by a most ample apology for his unjustifiable rudeness; and she, on the other hand, agreed to give up the invaluable Holmes. Yet she could not understand why her cousin had betrayed such a dislike to Holmes. Nor could she understand why, when she had to go down to Woodley Manor, he would not come and see her, though his own father was coming over to carry off the youthful heir. The plain fact was that she did not perceive how anxious he was to consider that long period of separation as never having existed; while she was continually harping on what she did this year or the other year, and what Lord Silverdale

had said on this or the other occasion. But Frank Cheshunt forgave much to his beautiful cousin; knowing that he would soon have ample time to explain to her all his views about their coming life together, when perhaps she, too, would resolve to forget.

CHAPTER IV.

REVELATIONS.

"O that 'twere possible,
After long grief and pain;
To find the arms of my true love
Round me once again!"—

this had been the secret, yearning cry of Frank Cheshunt, as it has been the cry of thousands on thousands of other people, who, even in married life sometimes, have been visited by moments of sentimental regret, when they believed that their life might have been other than it is. Very well, then. He had his wish. When everybody heard of Lady Silverdale and her old lover having gone off on their wedding trip, it was universally conceded that poetic justice had been awarded, and the romance happily and fitly come to an end.

He took her down to Dover—to a hotel where the

Mumm's "extra dry" is very good, and the drainage very bad. Anxious as he was to leave England and all its associations behind, he nevertheless gladly consented to stay in Dover for two or three days, for the sea was not quite a mill-pond, and Lady Silverdale had a horror of a rough passage. When he pointed out to her that there was not a white line on the sea, and not a breath of wind anywhere, and yet found her unwilling to cross, he generously yielded to her timid fears. But when he found that, by waiting, she had managed to receive a budget of letters from Woodley Manor, and was disposed to seek his advice about certain propositions of her land-steward, he put on his hat and walked out, and for about three-quarters of an hour smoked a cigar on the pier.

"I hope," said he, when he returned, "that you don't mean to have letters dogging your footsteps all over the Continent?"

"My dear Frank," said she, looking up in perfect innocence, "we are not going into banishment, are we?"

But after all he had to be considerate towards this beautiful bride of his, if she should not understand all his imaginative purposes and wishes all at once. And now he found her ready to cross the Channel at any moment. That night the water was smooth as

glass; there was scarcely a ripple in the harbour to break the reflection of the stars. They got their things on board; and remained on deck during the whole of the passage. When they reached Calais pier, he had of course all the bother of looking after rugs and hand-bags, and so forth, of which she had a considerable stock; and when they had got up and into Calais station, he proposed they should have a basin of soup, or some such thing, before getting to sleep in the carriage that was to take them on to Brussels. But all her anxiety was to send a telegram to Maudey, at Dresden, announcing the safe voyage across the Channel. He did not see the fun of blundering about this gloomy station in the middle of the night.

"You telegraphed to her yesterday," said he, rather impatiently, "what on earth is the good of telegraphing now?"

"I am sure the dear child will be so anxious until she knows I am safely over."

"I hope the dear child is in bed," said he.

"She would get the telegram the first thing in the morning," his wife responded, and then she added regretfully, "If Holmes had been with us, I could have sent her at once—she was very clever at doing these little things for me."

"Shall I put the telegram in French or English?"

said he abruptly; and then he stalked off to send that message to the "Honble. Maud Calesthorpe, Pension Grimm, Nudelsuppe-strasse, No. 49, Dresden."

They spent a day in Brussels, or rather in the Rue Montagne de la Cour, for Lady Silverdale greatly admired the shops, particularly the lace shops, in that thoroughfare; and she said she liked to hear her own tongue spoken by the people about her who were staring in at the windows. He bought some trifles for her; she bought some presents for Maudey, Ernestine, and Harry.

Now on his recent return from distant lands Cheshunt had come home by way of the Rhine; and at Cologne had stumbled across a hotel which has a very pretty balcony, or "Belvedere," right at the top of it, from which one has a commanding view of the Rhine, and of the distant country around the Drachenfels. At that time he imagined to himself, if only his old sweetheart would now consent to marry him, the pleasure he would have in leading her up to this lofty balcony, and showing her the broad and flowing river and the distant ramparts that guard the entrance to the great valley of romance. But when they got to Cologne, he found that she knew the hotel very well; and did not think it worth while to undertake the fatigue of climbing to

the Belvedere; and was mostly curious to know how far Dresden was from Cologne. In fact, she had a familiar acquainance with the Rhine. She had spent a month at Königswinter, when Maudey was recovering from the measles. Did he know that Maudey's sketches of Rolandseck and its neighbourhood had been shown to no less a person than Mr. Ruskin, who had not at all condemned them. Had he ever heard Maudey sing "The Lorelei"? In his secret heart Lady Silverdale's husband coupled the name of Maudey with an expletive which was quite uncalled-for, and indeed so improper that it cannot be put down here.

However, when they got to Geneva, and he found she had never been there before, nor yet to Chamounix, things looked better; and now he felt they were really setting out on their wedding tour, leaving the world behind them. At eight o'clock on a beautiful bright summer morning, they got into the large and open carriage which had been ordered over-night. The scarlet-coated driver cracked his long whip; the four horses, ornamented with foxes' tails and pheasant's feathers, started off at a rattling pace, with all their bells jingling; they crossed the bridge that spans the blue and rushing waters of the Rhone; they took a last look at the broad and still bosom of the lake; and then away they went—all

by themselves — towards the deep and beautiful valley lying under the white snows of Mont Blanc.

"At last," said he, "Mary, we have got clear away from England; and I don't care whether I ever see it again."

"I think you would soon tire of perpetual holidays, Frank," said she, with a smile; but she put her hand into his, and he felt contented and happy.

Suddenly she looked round at the rugs and bags with which the interior of the open carriage was filled.

"Where is that batch of newspapers that came yesterday?" she asked.

"Newspapers?" said he, lightly. "What do we want with newspapers? I left them."

"Indeed, Frank, you should have brought them on; you ought to be ready to take your own part in public affairs when we go back; for a man gets so much more consideration shown him when he is in Parliament; and of course the Liberals will get in again; and they might give you some office; and then you know how important it would be for the girls, by and by, to go to the official receptions and such things—"

"My dear Mary," said he, with some firmness, "we will leave all that alone for the present. I think we ourselves are entitled to some little consi-

deration; and if it suited us not to return to England for some time—for an indefinite period—politics would get on very well without us; and so I am sure would those charming young ladies about whom you feel so anxious."

She detected no sarcasm in his tone. She said innocently,—

"They are really such good girls; you will love them more the more you see of them; and you know you will have to be a father to the poor things, Frank. Fancy their being away all by themselves in that strange town—"

"I suppose this must be Chesne," said he rudely.

Every one who drives from Geneva to Chamounix ought to stop at the small village of St. Martin, where, while lunch is being got ready, he may walk down to the bridge over the river, from which the first impressive view of Mont Blanc is to be obtained. Frank Cheshunt and his bride did so; and as they leaned on the stone parapet, over the chalky-green and rushing waters, they found before them the great white shoulders of Mont Blanc standing far, and high, and clear in a cloudless blue sky. It was a spectacle that called for silence.

"It is very pretty," said Lady Silverdale. "Really, the white and the blue are exactly like—"

"Like one of Maudey's drawings?" said he,

fiercely. "Is it literally impossible for you to look at any given object, or to pass a single moment in the society of any being, without continually harping on Maudey and Ernestine, and Ernestine and Maudey?"

She did not answer him. She turned her head away, and tears began to run down her cheeks. He knew he had been a brute.

"Come, Mary," said he, and he took hold of her arm, "you must forgive me. I am very sorry. I did not mean to hurt you."

For the rest of that day she maintained a strict silence as regarded Maudey and Ernestine—an enforced silence that was perhaps more irritating than free speech. It raised a certain barrier between them. When they reached their hotel at Chamounix, about six o'clock in the evening, she went up to her room, saying that she had a headache and would lie down. She failed to appear at dinner; preferring a cup of tea and a bit of dry toast. So he dined at the *table-d'hôte* without her; made the acquaintance of nobody; and after dinner, in the cool, clear evening, went off for a long leisurely walk along the road leading through the valley, that he might smoke his cigar in peace. He was not thinking now of Maudey, nor yet of Ernestine, nor yet of his old fair love of former days; but of an interview which he had had with Lord Hartington about a week before he had

started. He had also had a talk with Mr. Adam. Frank Cheshunt was no longer the fierce irreconcilable he had been in his hot youth. In his wanderings abroad he had come to doubt the saving virtues of more than one party Shibboleth. But he still professed himself a Liberal; and he had paid his subscription to the Devonshire as his humble tribute to the reconstruction of his party. He was thinking at this moment that, after all, it was not good for a man to be idle. And if the prospect of a General Election were remote, vacancies were still occurring by death and promotion to the Lords, in which case it was always better for a man who wanted to slip quietly into a seat to be on the spot. No one knew how his country might suffer by his absence.

CHAPTER V.

"THE PITY OF IT, IAGO."

They remained about ten days or a fortnight at Chamounix, making all the orthodox excursions, except the Jardin, which Lady Silverdale was afraid to attempt. She had forgotten or forgiven that little episode at St. Martin, and was quite as much disposed as ever to chat cheerfully about her dear girls. When she climbed up to the Glacier des Bossons she brought away souvenirs for them; when she got to Montanvert she gathered ferns for them; when she was carefully handed over the rounded and slippery blocks of the Mer de Glace she shudderingly looked at the deep blue crevices on either hand, and declared that she would never allow her children to cross that terrible place—a decision she adhered to all the more when she had clambered down the Mauvais Pas, clinging to the

iron rope, and not daring to turn her eyes for a moment towards the sheer precipice beneath her feet.

And Frank Cheshunt, being a good-natured, reasonable fellow, argued with himself, and tried to persuade himself that it was but natural for his wife to be continually thinking about Maudey. Do not all women who have children bore their relatives and friends by persistent talking about these infant prodigies? And here was a mother taken away from her children for the first time. If the truth were told—and the object of this story is to tell the truth—it was not alone her constant talking about her children that somewhat painfully disappointed Lady Silverdale's husband. He found that their tastes were very different, and that she was not a little opinionated. He was shocked to find, for example, that she greatly admired a species of novel which he particularly detested—and here they might have been content to differ; but when he proceeded to show that these descriptions of life and manners were only fit for the scullery and the stable, he was met by an exhibition of will and temper that pretty plainly warned him off attempting to convert his wife to his views about literature. She was not a strong woman in any way. Her natural detestation of one whom she considered to be the perjured and treacherous assassin of innocent women and children,

and of an event which she considered to be the blackest crime in modern history, melted away before the solvent influence of an invitation to dine at St. Cloud, and she acquired a thoroughly *bourgeois* delight in the spangle-glitter of Paris. She was rather dense, too, as regarded a joke, and consequently very apt to take offence at perfectly good-natured raillery. The mere mention of certain subjects seemed to freeze her into an icicle; she knew that her husband was going to say something that would wound her feelings. Bishops, for instance: why is it that gentlemen who profess Liberal opinions should be so fond of making fun of bishops, who are a most respectable class of persons when they are rightly understood? Now the moment that Frank Cheshunt began to talk about a bishop, his wife froze. He was nearly proposing a compromise on this matter—offering to cut out the whole bench from his conversation, if she would consent to cut out Maudey from hers. But he refrained from making the suggestion, for she would most certainly have construed it into an attack on the Established Church.

At this point of the narrative the writer would like to put in a disclaimer. The reader may, as his temperament suggests, object to this story as impertinently flippant, or as too painfully miserable, or as fiendishly malicious. But he must not regard it as

written with a purpose. It would be a mistake to suppose that if every man who now, in the quiet jog-trot of married life, thinks of the early love of his youth, and perhaps deplores the imagined happiness that then vanished out of his grasp—it would be a mistake to suppose that every such man, had he married his early love, would have found her out to be an unmistakable ass. We are now dealing only with Frank Cheshunt and Lady Silverdale, and their story, which every one assures you is so romantic. Painful as the task may be, it becomes necessary to tell the simple truth about that romance.

The first time they went up to Montanvert they saw a wonderful sight. Up to that period the weather had been too fine, and they had grown tired of looking up at the great white shoulder of Mont Blanc standing clear against the blue sky. But on this occasion great moving and ragged masses of fog lay over the Mer de Glace, entirely shutting off the mountains beyond; and when they and the guide proceeded to descend from Montanvert to cross the glacier, they could see nothing at all in front of them. Suddenly, however, Cheshunt uttered an exclamation. His eye had somehow been attracted upward, and there, apparently overhead, above the long and shifting swathes of fog, and seeming to belong to another world, rose far away into the

unimaginable distance long glittering spires and pinnacles of rock, gleaming in a sunshine that came from a sky which they could not see. It was their first revelation of the awful height of this mountain-land, and it had come upon them in the form of a vision; for these scarred and snow-spreckled Aiguilles, that shone away up there in the intense and distant blue, seemed to be glittering, beautiful phantoms that had sprung upwards to this amazing altitude from the witch's cauldron of whirling and changing fog. Cheshunt had seen many sights in his time, but even he was overawed by the incomparable majesty and splendour of this weird thing, and for a second or two he could not speak. His wife came to his relief.

"Oh, Frank, isn't it beautiful?" she said, in simple faith. "I never saw anything like that before. It reminds one of that beautiful picture of heaven—you remember."

"Oh, yes," he said quickly, "Martin's. It is quite like that. Shall I carry your alpenstock for you until we get down to the ice?"

She got very tired of Chamounix before they left. She did not at all like this rough work of jolting about on mules; it sadly disarranged her toilette. Then they had not met a single acquaintance, though they tried the *tables-d'hôte* of the associated hotels

in succession. She used to glance over *Galignani* after dinner, and read out to her husband the names of her friends who, as she saw, were in Paris.

At last they set out from Chamounix—Lady Silverdale mounted on a patient mule, her husband walking by her side, and an attendant bringing up a spare mule in the rear. They made a picturesque group enough, and it was a day fit to be remembered specially even in a wedding-tour. He was a good specimen of the stalwart, manly Englishman; her beautiful refined face had got some touch of colour in it from the cool fresh winds; and they were slowly ascending the pass of the Tête Noire, which is the grandest pass in Europe, with the sunlight shining on the wonderful snow-peaks all around them. They ought to have been content.

Somehow Frank Cheshunt was not quite so hopeful as he had been about that project of his, which was now about to be tried. He had spoken to his wife, timidly and tentatively, about the beauties of the Lake of Geneva. He had described the clear blue waters, the fair skies, the panorama of mountains, the white walls of the Castle of Chillon reflected in the crystal deeps. He had described, too, a spacious villa, set amid gardens, with quaint eaves and green casements; its gleaming white front variegated here and there by trellis-work; its garden walls a mass of

crimson with Virginia creepers; its cool summer-house by the side of the lake. She said it was very nice, but she did not add that she would care to live all her life at Ouchy.

It was well on towards evening when they drew near to Martigny; and as they went down the mountain-side, passing through the twilight of the dense forests, she looked like some princess of romance attended by her faithful squire on foot. She was cheerful, too, with a new cheerfulness that surprised him after all the fatigues of the day. The fact was, she had inquired of the mule-driver, and learned that they should pass the post-office in going into Martigny, and there she expected to get a whole batch of letters from Dresden, Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire, and London.

They stopped in passing, and her husband very willingly went into the post-office. It was but natural she should want to have her letters; she had received none for two or three days. When he came out, however, and said that there was not even one for her, she grew terribly alarmed. Something dreadful must have happened. They had acted in concert to keep back the news. He must telegraph at once to Maudey, to his uncle, to everybody.

"Nonsense," said he; "can't you wait till the morning? There is a post in at ten."

She was hurt by his cruel indifference; but she consented to wait. The whole evening she was silent and *distraite:* he could scarcely get a word out of her. Next morning she was at the post-office by half-past nine, just to see if the mails might not be in sooner than usual. They were later than usual. When they did arrive, she almost refused to believe the postmaster that there was not a single letter for her.

She walked quickly back to the hotel; her husband was standing in the archway, smoking a cigar. She went past him without speaking, and he noticed something peculiar about her expression.

"Hallo, Mary, where are you going?" said he.

She turned for a moment; there was a sparkle of anger in her eyes, in the midst of all her dread.

"I must get money to telegraph for myself, I suppose," she said, "since you won't. There is not a single letter. I know something has happened."

"Better wait till two," said he; "There is another post in from England then."

She did not answer. She went up and got her purse, and then walked off to the post-office, where she bothered the poor post-master for half an hour with her applications and inquiries. Ultimately, as it turned out, there was not the least occasion for all this worry. She received a telegram from Maudey

saying that all was well, but she had neglected to write. She received a telegram from London saying all was well, but that the last batch of letters had been forwarded by mistake to Chamounix instead of Martigny.

"Very well," said her husband; "now we can go on to Ouchy. We will send a message to Chamounix to forward letters there."

But she would not hear of that. She would remain in Martigny until the letters arrived. She could not go on without her letters from London.

At this point his patience broke down.

"I wish to heaven," he said savagely—but he really did not intend her to hear, "that you had never left London!"

"Do you wish," said she, turning round and becoming rather pale, "do you wish, Frank, that you had never married me?"

He dared not quite say that, when they were not much more than a month married; but he said, with extreme bitterness,—

"And what then? Would it concern you? You seem to consider your marriage as but a very trifling accident—of somewhat less importance than Maudey's toothache, or the building of the new stables at Woodley Manor."

"I don't quite understand you, Frank," she said

calmly: she had a vague notion that she was being insulted, or at least injured; but she did not exactly know which phrase to complain of.

Once more, however, peace was patched up between them, Cheshunt spending the best part of a day and a half in walking up and down the main street of Martigny, smoking cigars, while they waited for the precious letters. That batch of correspondence having at length arrived, they started for Ouchy; but now his fond fancy about beginning a new life there with his sweetheart of old was distinctly moribund.

It was a beautiful clear forenoon when they stood on the small wooden pier—I really forget the name of the village—waiting for the steamer. The skies were blue, the waters were blue, a soft sunlight lay along the smiling green shores. Frank Cheshunt was looking rather blankly out on the smooth, beautiful lake.

"How long do we stay at Ouchy?" said his wife; and somehow the voice that startled him from his reverie sounded business-like and harsh.

"I had a fancy," said he, with a smile, "that we might remain there a long time—if you had been less occupied with England, Mary. I had some vague wish to take a house there—"

"Oh, I am so glad you no longer think of that,"

she said quite cheerfully. "Ouchy, of all places in the world! We should not know a soul there; and as for amusements! Now, it is quite remarkable the number of people we know who happen to be in Paris at present. Don't you think we had better get back to Paris as soon as possible, Frank dear?"

"Yes," said he, speaking with measured indifference; "I think we ought at once to make for Paris. And then, as you will be with plenty of friends there, you would not mind my running over to London for a few days. The fact is, —— asked me to let him have that article by the 1st of November, and I must have an afternoon or two in the library at the Reform."

"Well," she said, smiling, "people may think it odd if you return to London by yourself from your wedding trip. But it is only for a day or two?"

"Oh, only for a day or two," said he; the steamer was coming in at the moment, and he was busy about the rugs.

It was on that pier that Frank Cheshunt's illusory project, based on the assumption that Lady Silverdale would necessarily prove to be all that his boyish dreams had imagined Mary Cheshunt to be, dropped stone-dead; and as he was a practical, sensible sort of man, he resolved to think no more about it. He took his wife to Paris, and left her in

good hands, while he ran over to London for materials for his magazine article. The last that I heard of Lady Silverdale and her husband was that she was temporarily staying in Dresden, to the great delight of herself and Maudey and Ernestine; that he was waging a spirited but hopeless fight in a North of Scotland borough which had just become vacant; and that both he and she were quite—well, quite comfortable.

So far the story in its plain truth: this may be added, perhaps, as a guess—that if Frank Cheshunt should now and again—by some such accident as happens to many—see a beautiful, tender face in his dreams—a face familiar, yet strangely unfamiliar, to him—the face of a woman whom he has loved; and if his heart should grow sick with the pain of seeing her turn away from him; and if he should follow with a pitiful agony the receding form wringing its hands with grief, and withdrawing from him at last the beautiful, bedimmed, never-to-be-forgotten eyes, you may be sure that the face and the figure he beholds with mingled yearning and anguish in these phantom halls of sleep are those not of Lady Silverdale, his wife, but of Mary Cheshunt, his cousin, and his early love.

THE MARRIAGE OF MOIRA FERGUS.

THE MARRIAGE OF MOIRA FERGUS.

CHAPTER I.

MOIRA SEEKS THE MINISTER.

It was a grey day; the skies were clouded over; the Atlantic was sea-green and rough; the rocky islands along the coast looked black in the driving sea. A young girl, with her shawl wrapped round her head and shoulders, had come all the way across the island of Darroch to the Free Church Manse on the western side, and now she timidly tapped at the door. She was a quiet little Highland girl, not very pretty, perhaps; she was fair, freckled, and wistful of face; but she had a certain innocence and "strangeness" in her blue eyes that pleased people. Her name was Moira Fergus—Moireach Fearghus some would have spelt it; and she was the eldest of a family of five, who all lived on the eastern shores of Darroch with their father, John Fergus.

She tapped at the door, and a stalwart middle-aged woman answered.

"Ay, iss it you, Moira, that I see here this day? and what will you be wanting to say to the minister?"

The girl seemed frightened; but at last she managed to say that she wanted to see the minister alone. The Highland woman regarded her with some suspicion; but at length asked her to come in and sit down in the small parlour while she would go for Mr. MacDonald. The girl went into the room; and somewhat nervously sat down on one of the chairs. For several minutes she remained there alone, looking in an absent way at the big shells on the mantelpiece, and listening vaguely to the roar of the sea outside.

Then Mr. MacDonald appeared—a small, thin, red-faced Celt, not very careful as to dress, and obviously partial to snuff.

"Kott pless me—and you, too, Moira Fergus," said he. "And it wass no thought of seeing you that I had this tay. And wass there anything wrong now with your father, that you hef come all the way from Ardtilleach?"

"No, Mr. MacDonald, there iss not anything the matter with my father," said the girl, nervously working with the corner of her shawl. "There iss

not anything the matter with my father,—but—but —you know, Mr. MacDonald, that it is not every one that can get a smooth word from my father."

"A smooth word?" said the minister. "And indeed it iss your father, Moira, that iss the angriest man in all the islands, and there iss no sort of holding of his tongue. There are other men—ay, there are other men—who will be loose of their tongues on the weekdays, and they will speak of the teffle without much heed of it—and what iss the harm, too, if you will tam the teffle when you speak of him, and it will come to him all in good time; but to tam other people, and on the Sabbath, too, that iss a very tiffcrent matter. The teffle—well, he is tammed whateffer; but how can you know that Mr. Ross of Styornoway, or Mr. Macleod of Harris iss in the black book? But I will say no harm of your father, Moira Fergus."

And, indeed, Mr. MacDonald had some cause to be silent; for—always excepting on Sundays, when he proved himself a most earnest and faithful shepherd—he was himself given to the use of strong language and a little strong drink. He was none the less respected by his flock that occasionally he worked himself into a passion and uttered phrases that would have driven the Free Church Synod into fits. On the Sundays, however, he always had a

clean shirt, would touch no whisky, and made use of no vehement language—unless that vehemence appeared in his Gaelic sermons, which were of the best of their kind.

"Oh, Mr. MacDonald," the girl suddenly cried out, with a strange pleading in her eyes, "you will be a frient te me, and I will tell you why I hef come all the way from Ardtilleach. It wass Angus M'Eachran and me—you know Angus M'Eachran, Mr. MacDonald?—it wass Angus M'Eachran and me—well, we were thinking of getting married—ay, it iss many a day since he hass talked of that—"

"Well, well, Moira, and what more? Is there any harm in it that a young man and a young lass should think of getting married?"

The girl still kept nervously twitching the corner of her shawl.

"And there iss many a time I hef said to him, 'Angus, we will get married some day; but what for should we get married now, and the fishing not very good whateffer?' And there is many a time he hass said to me, 'Moira, you hef done enough for your father and your father's children, and if he will not let you marry, do you think, then, that you will neffer marry?'"

"Your younger sisters must be growing up, Moira," the minister said.

"And the days went by," the girl continued, sadly, "and the weeks went by, and Angus M'Eachran he wass ferry angry with me many a time, and many a time I hef said to him, 'Angus, you will be doing petter if you will go away and get some other young lass to be your wife, for it will be a bad tay the tay that I quarrel with my own people to come to you and be your wife.' And it iss many the night I hef cried about it—from the night to the morning; and it wass many a time I will wish that I had neffer seen him, and that he had neffer come down from the Lewis, the year that the herring came round about Darroch and Killeena. And now—and now—"

Well, the girl burst into tears at this point and the minister not knowing very well what to do, brought out a bottle of whisky, and said,—

"Now, Moira, be a good lass, and do not cry ass if you wass without friends in the world. What iss it now that iss the matter?"

"Well, Mr. MacDonald," the girl said, between her sobs, "it wass five days or four days ago that Angus came to me, and he said to me, 'Moira, it iss no more any use the trying to get married in Darroch, for your father he iss a violent man, and he will not hear of it; and what we hef to do iss to go away

from Darroch, you and me together, and when the wedding iss all over, then you can come back and tell your people.'"

"That wass not well spoken," said the minister. "It iss a bad day for a young lass when she hass to run away from her own people."

He was beginning to see the cause of the trouble that was visible on the fair young face.

"And I said to him," continued the girl, struggling to restrain her tears, "I said to him, 'It iss a hard thing that you ask, Angus M'Eachran, but it iss many a long day and many a long month you hef waited for me to marry you, as I said I would marry you; and if it iss so that there will be no chance of our getting married in Darroch, I will go away with you.' Then he said, 'Moira, I will find out about a poat going up to the Lewis, and if they will put us ashore at Borvabost, or Barvas, or Callernish, we will walk across the island to Styornoway, and there we will get the poat to tek us to Glassgow.'"

"To Glassgow!" cried the minister. "Wass you thinking of going to Glassgow, Moira Fergus?"

The girl looked rather abashed.

"And you do not know what an ahfu' place is Glassgow—ay, indeed, an ahfu' place," said the minister earnestly. "No, you do not know—but I

hef been more ass three times or two times in Glassgow—and for a young lass to go there! You do not know, Moira Fergus, that it iss filled, every street of it, with wild men that hef no more care for the Sabbath-day ass if it wass Tuesday, ay, or even Monday—and the sodgers there—and the Roman Catholics—and no like the Catholics that you will see, one of them, or two of them, about Lochaber, where they are ferry like good, plain, other people—but it iss the *Roman* Catholics, Moira—it iss the real *Roman* Catholics, Moira—you will find in Glassgow, and they are ferry wild men, and if they were to rise against the town in the night-time, it would be the Lord's own mercy if they did not burn every person in his bed. Indeed, indeed, Moira Fergus, you must not go to Glassgow!"

"And I do not want to go to Glassgow!" Moira said excitedly, "that is what I hef come to you about this tay, Mr. MacDonald. I hef a great fear of going to Glassgow, and I wass saying to myself that it wass you, Mr. MacDonald, that maybe could help me—and if you wass to see Angus M'Eachran—"

"But if I wass to see your father, Moira Fergus—there iss no man so mad ass not to know that a young lass will be thinking of getting married."

"That will be of no use whateffer, Mr. MacDonald. It iss a very angry man he is, and if there iss any

more word of the marriage I will be afraid to go back to Ardtilleach."

"Then the teffle—and tam him!—hass got into his head!" said the minister, with a furious blow on the table. "It iss no patience I hef with a foolish man!"

Moira was rather frightened, but she said in a low voice,—

"Ay, ay, it iss a ferry angry man he is; and there iss no use going to him, Mr. MacDonald; but this iss what I wass thinking, Mr. MacDonald, if you wass being so kind ass to go to Angus M'Eachran, and tell him that it iss not a good thing for us to go away to Glassgow. I hef given my word to him—yes, and I will not draw back from that—but now I hef a great fear of going to Glassgow—"

The minister was during this time shifting rather uneasily from the table to the window and from the window to the table. He was evidently much excited: he seemed scarcely to hear what the girl was saying. At last he suddenly interrupted her.

"Listen to me, Moira Fergus. It iss no business of mine—no, it iss not any business of mine—as a minister, to interfere in the family affairs of any one whateffer; and you had no right to come to the minister and ask him to go and speak to Angus M'Eachran. No, you had no right; and yet I will

say this, Moira Fergus, that you had a ferry good right—ay, the teffle is in it if you had not a ferry good right. For I am a natif of this island—well, it wass in Harris I wass born, but what iss the use of being ferry particular?—and I am a natif of this island as well as a minister, and I hef known your family for a great many years, and I hef known you to be a good lass—and—and this iss what I wass going to say to you that, before I will see you going away to Glassgow, I will marry you and Angus M'Eachran myself, ay, so that no one shall know of it until it is all ferry well ofer. And what do you say to that, Moira Fergus?"

The girl started, flushed, and then looked timidly down.

"It iss a ferry good man you are, Mr. MacDonald," she said hesitatingly, "and a ferry good friend you hef always been to me—but—but it iss not for me to say that I hef come to ask you to marry us; and it is Angus M'Eachran, Mr. MacDonald, and not me, that hass to say 'yes' or 'no' to that."

"Ay, ay!" said the minister cheerfully and courageously, "it is no fault for a young lass to be shy; and it iss right what you hef said, Moira, that I will speak to Angus M'Eachran. And there iss another I will speak to apout it, for it iss no trifling matter, Moira, and I will hef to see that we are sure and safe

in what hass to be done; and you know that there iss not any one about the islands that has trafelled so far ass Mr. Mackenzie, of Borva; and it iss a great many things he will know, and I think I will go and say a word to him, Moira."

"It iss a long way the way to Borva, Mr. MacDonald."

"Well, I was told by Alister Lewis that the men of the *Nighean-dubh* were coming up from Taransay about one o'clock or twelve o'clock to-morrow's morning, and if it iss not ferry pad weather they will go on to Loch Roag, so I think I will go with the *Nighean-dubh*. Now, you will go back to Ard-tilleach, Moira Fergus, and you will say not a word to any one until the time wass come I will be speaking myself to Angus M'Eachran; and now you will tak a tram, Moira, for it iss a ferry coorse sort o' day, and a healthy young lass will hef no harm from a trop of good whisky."

"You are ferry kind, Mr. MacDonald, but I do not touch the whisky."

"No? Then I will hef a drop myself, to wish you good luck, Moira; and when I come back from Borvabost, then I will tell you what Mr. Mackenzie says, and you will keep up your spirits, Moira, and you will find no need to go away from your own people to be married in Glassgow."

When Moira Fergus went outside, a new light seemed to fill the world. Certainly the sea was green and rough, and there were huge white breakers heaving over on the black rocks. But it seemed to her that there was a sort of sunshine in the green of the sea; and she had a consciousness of sunshine being behind the grey clouds overhead; and the dull brown moorland—mile after mile of it, in low undulation—was less lonely than when she had crossed it an hour before. And that red-faced irascible little minister, who lived by himself in the solitary manse out by the sea, and who was just a trifle too fond of whisky and fierce language during six days of the week, was to her as a bright angel come down from heaven with promises of help, so that the girl, as she thought of the future, did not know whether to laugh or to cry for joy.

CHAPTER II.

A VISIT TO GREAT PEOPLE.

"The teffle—and tam him!—is in the carelessness of you, Alister-nan-Each!" cried the minister, catching up his coat tails. "What for will you knock your fish against my coat, and me going up to see Mr. Mackenzie and his daughter, that iss ass good ass an English lady now?"

Alister made a humble apology to the minister, and took his own bonnet to remove any lingering traces of the *Nighean-dubh* from the minister's costume, and then Mr. MacDonald got ashore at Borvabost. He had a word or two to say to some of the people whom he knew; then he went up and over the hill to the house of a certain Mr. Mackenzie, who was called by some folks the "King of Borva."

"And iss Mr. Mackenzie in the house, Mairi?" said he to the young girl who came to the passage

—the doors in this part of the world are kept shut against rain, but never against strangers.

"No," said she, "Mr. MacDonald, he is not in Borva at all, but away over at Stornoway, and it is ferry sorry he will be that you hef come to Borva and him away from his own house. But there iss Miss Sheila, she will be down at her own house; and she will be very ill pleased that you will come to Borva if you will not call at her house."

"Oh, I will call at her house; and it is ferry glad I am that she hass not gone away ass yet; and I am glad to see that you are still with Mr. Mackenzie, Mairi."

The old minister, grumbling over his disappointment, set out once more, and walked away across the moorland and down to a plateau over a quiet bay, where there was a large stone house built, with a verandah and a flower-garden in front. He saw there a young lady watering the tree-fuchsias—a handsome healthily-complexioned young woman, with dark hair, and deep blue eyes, who was the daughter of Mr. Mackenzie. She was rather well liked by the islanders, who generally called her "Miss Sheila," notwithstanding that she was married; although some of them had got into a shy, half-comical, half-tender fashion of calling her "Princess Sheila," merely because her husband had a yacht so named.

"And are you ferry well?" said she, running forward, with a bright smile on her face, to the minister. "And hef you come all the way from Darroch, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Ay, ay," said the minister, a little embarrassed, and looking down, "I hef come from Darroch; and it is a proud tay this tay that I will shake hands with you, Miss——Mrs. Laffenter; and it iss ferry glad I am that I will come to Borva, although your father is not here, for it iss not effery time in the year that a stranger will see you, Mrs. Laffenter."

"Oh, but you are no stranger, Mr. MacDonald," said this Mrs. Lavender. "Now come into the house, and I will ask you to stay and have some dinner with us, Mr. MacDonald, for you cannot leave for Darroch again to-night. And what did you want to see my father about, Mr. MacDonald?"

He followed her into the house, and sat down in a spacious sitting-room, the like of which, in its wonderful colours and decorations, he had never seen before. He could compare it only with Stornoway Castle, or his dreams of the palace in which the Queen lived in London.

Well, he told all the story of Moira Fergus and Angus M'Eachran to Mrs. Lavender, and said that he had come to ask the advice of her father, who was

a man who had travelled much and amassed knowledge.

"Surely you yourself are the best judge," said the handsome young wife. "They have lived long enough in the parish, hef they not, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Oh, that iss not it—that iss not the matter at all, Mrs. Laffenter!" said he emphatically. "I can marry them—oh, yes, I know I can marry them—in my own house, if I like. But it iss the prudence—it iss the prudence, Mrs. Laffenter—of it that iss in the question; and I am not sure of the prudence of it."

"Then I must ask my husband," said Sheila.

She went to the open window, took a whistle from her pocket, and blew a note loud and shrill that seemed to go echoing far across Loch Roag, away amid the blue and misty solitudes of the great Suainabhal. She stood there for a minute or two. Far below her there was a schooner yacht resting quietly in the bay; she could see a small boat put off, and land on the shore a man and a very tiny boy. The man was clad in rough blue homespun; he set the child of three or so on his shoulder, and then proceeded to climb the hill. In a few minutes there was the sound of some one on the gravel outside, and presently a tall young man, somewhat heavily bearded, marched into the drawing-room, and

threw the child into its mother's outstretched arms.

"Mr. MacDonald, of Darroch?" he cried. "Why, of course! And haven't you got such a thing as a glass of whisky in the house, Sheila, when a visitor comes all the way from Darroch to see you? And what's the best of your news, Mr. MacDonald?"

Sheila—or Mrs Lavender, as one ought to call her—having deposited the very young gentleman on the sofa, and given him a mighty piece of cake to console him for maternal neglect, proceeded to tell her husband of the causes of Mr. MacDonald's visit. His decision on the point was quickly taken.

"You'll get yourself into trouble, Mr. MacDonald, if you help them to a clandestine marriage. I wouldn't touch it, if I were you."

"Yes, I am afraid you will get yourself into trouble," said Sheila, with an air of wisdom.

"But, Kott pless me!" said the minister, indignantly, "hef I not told you they will run away to Glassgow?—and iss there anything ass bad ass that —that a young lad and a young lass will go away to Glassgow, and not one of them married until they get there?"

"Well, there's something in that," said Mr. Lavender. "What sort of fellow is this Angus M'Eachran?"

"Oh, he is a ferry tiligent young man—he hass a share in the poat, and he hass some money in the pank, and there iss none more cleffer than he is at the fishing. Ay, ay, he is a cleffer young man, and a good-looking young man; but if he wass not so free with his laugh, and his joke, and his glass—well, I will say nothing against the young man, who is a ferry respectable young man whateffer, and there is no reason why John Fergus should shut the door against him."

"Then can't the father be talked over?" said Mr. Lavender, pretending to snatch at the cake which his son was busily eating.

"Oh, couldn't I say something to him!" Sheila said, with entreaty in her eyes.

"You, Miss—Mrs. Laffenter!" said the minister, with surprise. "You, to go into John Fergus's house! Yes, indeed, it would be a proud day the day for him that you went into his house—ay, if he wass fifteen or a dozen John Ferguses. But you hef no imagination of that man's temper—and the sweerin of him!—"

"Oh, I should stop that," said Mr. Lavender. "If you like to go and talk to him, Sheila, I will undertake that he shan't swear much!"

"How could you know?" the girl said, with a laugh. "He would swear in the Gaelic. But if

there is no other means, Mr. MacDonald, I am sure anything is better than letting them run away to Glasgow."

"Sheila," said the husband, "when do we go to London?"

"In about a week now we shall be ready, I think," she said.

"Well, look here. You seem interested in that girl—I don't remember her having been here at all. However, suppose we put off our going to London, and see these young folk through their troubles?"

Of course he saw by her face that that was what she wanted: he had no sooner suggested such a thing than the happiest light possible sprang to her eyes.

"Oh, will you?" she cried.

"And in for a penny, in for a pound," said he. "I suppose you want witnesses, Mr. MacDonald? What if my wife and myself went round in the yacht to Darroch, and helped you at your private wedding?"

"Hey!" said Mr. MacDonald, with his eyes staring. "You, sir, come to the wedding of Moira Fergus? And Miss Sheila, too? Why, there iss no man in all the islands would not gif away his daughter—ay, twenty daughters—if he wass told you will be coming to the wedding—not any man but John Fergus; and

there is the anger of the teffle himself in the nature of John Fergus; and it iss no man will go near him."

"But I will go near him!" said Sheila proudly, "and he will speak no rough speech to me."

"Not, if I can understand him, and there is a door handy," said her husband, with a laugh.

"Ay, ay, you will come to the wedding?" said the minister, almost to himself, as if this assurance were almost too much for mortal man to hear. He had made a long and disagreeable voyage from the one island to the other, in order to seek the advice of a capable man; but he had not expected such high and honourable sanction of his secret aims. Now, indeed, he had no more hesitation. Mr. Mackenzie was a wise man, and a travelled man, no doubt; but not even his counsel could have satisfied the old minister as did the prompt and somewhat reckless tender of aid on the part of Mr. Lavender, and the frank and hearty sympathy of the beautiful "Princess Sheila."

CHAPTER III.

A MEETING OF LOVERS.

A STILL, calm night lay over the scattered islands; there was no sound abroad but the occasional calling of the wildfowl; in the perfect silence there was scarcely even a murmur from the smooth sea. Night as it was, the world was all lit up with a wonderful white glory; for the moon down there in the south was almost full; and here the clear radiance fell on the dark moorland flats, on the bays of white sand fronting the sea, and on the promontories of black rock that jutted out into the shining water. Killeena lay cold and silent under the wan glare; Darroch showed no signs of life; the far mountains of the larger islands seemed visionary and strange. It was a night of wonderful beauty, but that the unusual silence of the sea had something awful in it; one had a sense that the mighty plain of water was perhaps stealthily rising to cover for ever those bits of

rock which, during a few brief centuries, had afforded foothold to a handful of human beings.

Down in one of the numerous creeks a young man was idly walking this way and that along the smooth sand—occasionally looking up to the rocks above him. This was Angus M'Eachran, the lover of Moira Fergus. There was obviously nothing Celtic about the young man's outward appearance: he was clearly of the race descended from the early Norwegian settlers in these islands—a race that, in some parts, has, notwithstanding intermarriage, preserved very distinct characteristics. He was a tall young fellow, broad-chested, yellow-bearded, good-looking enough, and grave and deliberate of speech. Moreover, he was a hard-working, energetic, shrewd-headed youth; there was no better fisherman round these coasts; he had earned his share in the boat, so that he was not at the mercy of any of the curers; he had talked of building a small stone cottage for himself; and it was said that he had a little money in the bank at Stornoway. But if Angus M'Eachran was outwardly a Norseman, he had many of the characteristics of the Celtic temperament. He was quick to imagine and resent affront. His seeming gravity of demeanour would, under provocation of circumstances, disappear altogether; and there was no one madder than he in the enjoy-

ment of a frolic, no one more generous in a fit of enthusiasm, no one more reckless in the prosecution of a quarrel. They said he sometimes took a glass too much on shore—led away by the delight of good fellowship; but the bitterest cold night, the most persistent rain, the most exhausting work, could not tempt him to touch a drop of whisky when he was out at the fishing.

A young girl, shawled over, came over the rocks, and made her way down to the sands.

"You are ferry late, Moira," said he. "I was thinking you wass not coming at all the night."

"It iss not an easy thing for me to get away, and that no one will know," said she timidly.

"Ay, ay, and that iss the worst of it!" said he bitterly. "It is no ferry good thing that you will hef to come away from the house like that, as if you wass a thief; and if it wass any other young lass, she would not hef suffered that so long; and now, Moira, this is what I hef to say to you—that you must do what you hef promised to do, and when we go to Glassgow——"

"Oh, Angus!" she said, "it iss not to Glassgow I can go——"

Even in the pale moonlight she could see the quick look of surprise, and anger, and jealousy that leapt to his eyes.

"And you will not go to Glassgow?" said he.

"Angus!" the girl said. "It iss ferry much I hef to say to you, and you will not be angry with me until I tell you. And it wass yesterday I went ofer to Mr. MacDonald, and I wass saying to him that there wass no more use in trying to speak to my father, and that you and me, Angus, we were thinking of going away to Glassgow—"

"And it iss a foolish lass you are!" he said impetuously, "and now he will come ofer to Ardtilleach—"

"He will not think of coming ofer to Ardtilleach; it iss a ferry kind man that Mr. MacDonald is; and he will say to me, 'Moira, will it not be petter, and a great deal petter, that I will marry Angus M'Eachran and you in Darroch, and no one will know until it iss ofer, and then you can go and tell your father?"

"Ay, did he say that?" exclaimed the young man, with his eyes wide.

"Indeed he did."

"Ay, ay, and it iss a ferry good man he is what-effer," said Angus, with a sudden change of mood. "And you, Moira, what wass it you will say to him?"

"Me?"

"Ay, you."

"Well," said the girl, looking down, but with

some pride in her tone; "it iss not for a young lass to say yes or to say no about such a thing—it iss for you, Angus, to go to the minister. B this is what I hef said to him, that the going to Glassgow wass a great trouble to me—ay, and a ferry great trouble—"

"Then I will go and see Mr. Macdonald!" said Angus hastily. "And this iss what I will say to him—that he iss a ferry good man, and that before three weeks iss ofer, ay, or two weeks, or four weeks, I will send to him a gallon of whisky the like of which he will not find from the Butt of Lewis down to Barra Head. Ay, Moira, and so you went all the way across the island yesterday? It iss a good lass you are; and you will be ferry much petter when you are married and in your own house, and away from your father, that hass no petter words for his own children ass if they wass swines. And it iss ferry early the morn's mornin' that I will go over to Mr. MacDonald—"

"But you need not do that, Angus," the girl said "for Mr. MacDonald has gone away to Borva, to ask the advice of Mr. Mackenzie. Yes, it is a great teal that Mr. MacDonald is doing for us."

"It will be the good whisky he will hef from me!" muttered Angus to himself.

"And now, Angus, I will be going back, for my

father he thinks I hef only gone over to get a candle from Mrs. M'Lachlan; and you will say nothing about all that I hef told you, only you will go ofer to Mr. MacDonald, Angus, on Saturday or Friday, and you will speak to him. And I will say good-night to you, Angus."

"I will go with you, Moira, along a bit of the road."

"No, Angus," the girl said anxiously, "if there wass any one will see us and will take the story to my father—"

She had no need to complete the sentence. Her companion laughed lightly and courageously as he took her hand.

"Ay, ay, Moira, it iss not always that you will hef to be afrait. And the story they will hef to take to your father, that will be a ferry goot story, that will be the ferry best story he will ever hear. Oh yes, he will say three words or two words to efferypody around him when he hears that teffle of a story."

If Angus was inclined to make light of the old man's probable rage, his sweetheart was not. The mere mention of it seemed to increase her desire to depart; and so he kissed her, and she went on her way home.

Perhaps he would have grumbled at the shortness

of the interview but that this new project had almost taken his breath away, and now wholly occupied his mind. He clambered up the rocks, got across to the road, and slowly walked along in the clear moonlight, in the direction of the cottages of Ardtilleach. To have a lover's meeting cut short on such a night would have been grievous under other circumstances; but that was forgotten in the suggestion that his marriage of Moira Fergus had now become possible and near.

Angus M'Eachran had never been to Glasgow, and he had the vague fear of the place which dwells in the minds of many islanders. The project of flight thither was a last and desperate resource after all hope of conciliating John Fergus was abandoned. But the young man had never felt so confident about it as he pretended to be in speaking to Moira Fergus. He knew nothing of how the people lived in Glasgow; of the possibility of two strangers getting married; of the cost of the long journey. Then he might have to leave his fishing for an indefinite period, and embarrass his comrades in the boat; he had a suspicion, too, that old John Fergus, having been robbed of his daughter, would appeal to the sheriff, and impound the money which he, Angus M'Eachran, had in the bank at Stornoway.

It was with great joy, therefore, that he heard of

this proposal. It seemed so much more fitting and proper for a man and a woman to get married in their own island. There would be no stain on the fair name of Moira Fergus, if she was married by Mr. MacDonald himself; whereas no one knew anything about the character of the Glasgow clergymen, who might, for all one knew, be secretly Roman Catholics. And then there was the remote chance that the wedding would have the august approval of the far-known Mr. Mackenzie, the King of Borva; which would silence the most censorious old hag who ever croaked over a peat-fire.

Angus M'Eachran reached the long and straggling line of hovels and cottages known as the fishing hamlet of Ardtilleach. Down there, on the white shores of the small creek, several of the boats were drawn up, their hulls black in the moonlight. Up on the rocks above were built the two long and substantial curing-houses, with plenty of empty barrels lying round the doors. There was scarcely any one about, though here and there the smoke from a chimney showed that the peats were being stirred within to light up the gloomy interior of the hut. He passed the rude little cottage in which John Fergus and his family lived.

"Ay, ay, Moira," he was thinking to himself, "you will have a better house to live in by and by,

and you will have better treatment in the house, and you will be the mistress of the house. And there will no one then say a hard word to you, whether he is your father or whether he is not your father ; and I will make it a bad day for any one that says a hard word to you, Moira Fergus."

CHAPTER IV.

THE GOOD NEWS.

Angus M'Eachran hung his head in a sheepish fashion when he stood before the minister. The stalwart, yellow-bearded young fisherman found it was not an easy thing to have to speak about marriage; and the proposal to give Mr. MacDonald a gallon of the best whisky had gone clean out of his head—banished, perhaps, by an instinctive reverence for spiritual authority. The little red-faced minister regarded him sternly.

"It wass not well done of you, Angus M'Eachran," said he, "to think of running away to Glassgow with John Fergus's daughter."

"And whose fault wass that, Mr. MacDonald," said the fisherman. "It wass the fault of John Fergus himself."

"Ay, ay, but you would hef made bad things worse. Why, to Glassgow! Do you know what Glassgow

is? No, you do not know; but you would hef found out what it iss to go to Glassgow! It was a ferry goot thing that Moira Fergus had the goot sense to come ofer to me; and now, as I tell you, we will try to satisfy effery one if you will come ofer on the Wednesday morning."

"It wass ferry kind of you, Mr. Macdonald, to go all the way to Borva to ask apout the marriage; I will neffer forget that, neffer at all. And I will tell you this, Mr. Macdonald, that it wass no great wish I effer had for the going to Glassgow; for when a man gets married, it is but right he should hef his friends apout him, for a dance and a song. And it wass many a time I hef peen thinking, when I first became acquent with Moira Fergus, that we would hef a ferrey goot wedding, and hef a tance and a tram; and it wass Alister Lewis the schoolmaster said to me the other day, 'Angus,' says he, 'do you not think of getting married? And when you are married,' says he, 'my wife and me will come and trink a glass to you and Moira Fergus.' And now, Mr. MacDonald, there will be no wedding at all—and not a single tance—or a tram—and no one to be there and be quite sure that we ara married."

Angus M'Eachran had become rather excited, and had blundered into eloquence. It was, indeed, a

sore point with the young fisherman that Moira and he were to be deprived of the great merry-making in the life of a man or woman. They would be married in a corner, with no joyous crowd of witnesses, no skire of the pipes, no whisky, no dancing or reels under the midnight sky.

"And you will not think, Mr. MacDonald," said he, returning to his ordinary grave and shy demeanour, "that I hef no thanks for you, although we will hef no goot wedding. Thet iss not anypotty's fault but the fault of John Fergus; and when I will will go to tell John Fergus that his daughter iss married—"

"You will not go to tell John Fergus that, Angus M'Eachran," said the minister. "It is another that will tell John Fergus. It is Miss Sheila Mackenzie, that iss Mrs. Laffenter now, that will be coming to tek the news to John Fergus."

The minister spoke proudly. He was vain of his acquaintance with great people. He had, indeed, reserved this piece of news until he saw fit to overwhelm his visitor with it.

The young fisherman uttered an exclamation in the Gaelic; he could scarcely believe what he had heard.

"Iss it Miss Sheila Mackenzie will be coming all the way from Borva to the marriage of Moira Fergus?" he said, with his eyes full of wonder.

"Ay, and her husband, too!" said the minister proudly. "Ay, and they are coming with their schooner yacht, and eight men aboard of her, to say nothing of Mrs. Patterson's boy. And you were saying, Angus M'Eachran, there would be no one at your wedding! Oh no, there will be no one at your wedding! It will only be Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter that will be at your wedding!"

Angus could not reply to this deadly sarcasm; he was lost in astonishment. Then he suddenly said, snatching up his cap,—

"I am going, Mr. MacDonald, to tek the news to Moira Fergus."

"Wait a minute, it iss a ferry great hurry you are in, Angus," said the minister. "You need not be afrait that any one will tek the news before yoursel'. There iss many things we hef to settle apout first—"

"But I will come ofer to-night again," said the fisherman—he was impatient to carry this wonderful news to Moira.

"Then there iss the teffle in your hurry, Angus M'Eachran!" said the minister angrily. "You will come ofer again to-night? You will not come ofer again to-night! Do you think you can waste the tays and the nights in running apout Darroch, when it iss to Stornoway you hef to go for the ring, and the money, and all that I hef told you?"

The fisherman stood abashed; he put his cap on the table, and was content to receive his instructions with patienee.

But when he went out, and had got a safe distance from the house, he suddenly tossed his cap high in the air.

"Hey!" he cried aloud, "here iss the good news for Moira Fergus!"

He laughed to himself as he sped rapidly across the moorland. It was a fine, bright morning; the sun was warm on the heather and the white rocks; now and again he saw before him a young grouse walk coolly across the dusty road. He took little notice, however, of anything around him. It was enough that the fresh air and the sunlight seemed to fill his lungs with a sort of laughing-gas. Never before had he walked so rapidly across the island.

The consequence was that he reached Ardtilleach about one o'clock.

"Now," said he to himself, "the girls will be at the school; and old John Fergus will be up at the curing-house; and what if Moira Fergus be all by herself at home?"

The news he had gave him so much courage that he did not spy about; he walked straight up to John Fergus's cottage, and, stooping, passed in. Sure enough, there was Moira, and alone. She was

seated near the fire, and was cleaning and chopping up some vegetables for the big iron pot that stood beside her. When she recognized Angus M'Eachran, she uttered a little cry of surprise, then she hastily jumped to her feet, and beat the parings out of her lap. But the young fisherman was not offended by the untidy scraps of carrot and turnip that clung to her apron; he was rather pleased to see that she was chopping up those vegetables very neatly—and he knew, for many a time he had had to make broth for himself.

"And are you not afrait, Angus, to come into this house?" she asked anxiously.

"No, I am not afrait!" said he. "For I hef the good news for you—ay, ay, I hef the good news for you this day, Moira—"

"Iss it my father—?"

"No, no!" said he. "It iss nothing of your father. I will not ask your father for anything not if he wass to live for sixty years, ay, and twenty years mirover. But I was ofer to see Mr. MacDonald this morning—ay, I set out ferry soon, for I heard last night he was come back from Borva—and this morning I was with him for a ferry long time. And now it iss all settled, Moira, my lass, and this ferry night I will be going away to Stornoway to buy the ring, Moira, and get some money out of the

bank, and other things. And Mr. MacDonald, he will say to me, 'Angus, you will hef to go and ask Moira Fergus to tell you the day she will be married, for effery young lass hass a right to that;' but I hef said to him, 'Mr. MacDonald, there iss no use for that; for it wass next Wednesday in the next week we wass to go away to Glassgow to be married; and that iss the day that iss fixed already'—and so, Moira, it iss Wednesday of the next week you will be reaty to go ofer—and—and—and iss there anything wrong with you, Moira Fergus?''

He offered her his hand to steady her; she was rather pale, and she trembled. Then she sate down on the wooden stool again, and turned her eyes to the floor.

"And it iss not ferry glad you are that the wedding iss near?" said he, with some disappointment.

"It iss not that, Angus M'Eachran," she said in a low voice. "It iss that—I am afrait—and it is a ferry terrible thing to go away and be married all by yourself—and no friend with you—"

"No friend?" said he, with a sudden joy: if this was all her doubt, he would soon remove it. "Ay, ay, Moira Fergus, you hef not heard all the news. There will be no one to come to your wedding? Do you know this, Moira, that it iss Miss Sheila

Mackenzie and her husband that iss an Englishman, and they are both coming to your wedding—ay, in that fine poat that iss the most peautiful poat that wass effer come in to Stornoway harbour—and who iss it in all this island that hass Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter come to her wedding—tell me that, Moira Fergus!"

Well, when Moira heard that Sheila Mackenzie and her husband were coming all the way from Borva to be present at her wedding, she burst into a fit of crying, and even the young man beside her understood what that meant.

"Ay, ay," said he, "it iss a ferry great deal the rich and the grand people can do for the poor people when it iss in their mind to do it, and it would be a pad tay for the poor people of Borva the tay that Miss Sheila would go away altogether to London; but there iss no fear of that now; and she is coming to your wedding, Moira, and it iss not pecause she is ferry rich and ferry grand that you will be proud of that, but I hef seen that you wass sore put about that there will be no woman at all at the wedding, and now here is one, and one that iss known through all the island—and it iss nothing to cry about Moira Fergus."

"No, it iss nothing to cry about," said the girl, "only—it iss a ferry great kindness—and I will not

know what to say—ay, are you quite sure they are coming all the way to Darroch, Angus?"

"Indeed there iss more than that to tell you, Moira; for it iss Mrs. Laffenter will be for coming to Ardtilleach to speak to your father as soon as the wedding is ofer—"

"What do you say, Angus M'Eachran?" the girl said, suddenly rising. "Hef you no sense to let her speak of such a thing? You will know what a man my father iss when he iss angry; and it iss you and me that will hef to tek his anger, not a stranger that has done us a great kindness; and it iss very thoughtless of you, Angus, to hef let Miss Sheila speak of that—"

"Moira, what are you thinking of?" he said. "When wass it that I hef seen Miss Sheila, and her away at Borva? It wass the minister, he wass speaking to both Mr. and Mrs. Laffenter, both of the two of them together, and it wass Miss Sheila herself will want to see your father sure enough and mirover!"

The girl said nothing in reply, for a sudden fear had fallen over her: a shadow darkened the doorway. Angus M'Eachran half instinctively turned round—there was John Fergus, staring at him with an anger which for the moment could not express itself in words. Moira's father was almost a dwarf

in stature; but he was broad-chested, bandy-legged, and obviously of great physical strength. He had a hard, grey, and sullen face, piercing black eyes under bushy grey eyebrows, thin lips, and a square jaw.

"Ay, it iss you, Angus M'Eachran," said he, still blocking up the doorway as if to prevent escape; "it wass a true word they will bring me that you will be for going into my house. And what iss it that will bring you to my house?"

"It iss not a ferry friendly man you are, John Fergus," said the tall young sailor, rather gloomily, "that you will say such things. And what iss the harm that one man will go into another man's house, and both of them neighbours together—"

"Ay, this iss the harm of it!" said John Fergus, giving freer vent to his rage. "You wass thinking that the lasses were at the school; and you wass thinking that I wass away o'er at Killeena with the new oars; and then you wass coming apout the house—like a thief that will watch a time to come apout a house—that wass the harm of it, Angus M'Eachran."

The younger man's face grew rather darker, but he kept his temper down.

"I am no thief, John Fergus. If it wass any

other man than yourself will say such a thing to me—"

"No, you are no thief," said the father, with sarcastic emphasis, "you will only come apout the house when there iss effery one away from it but a young lass, and you will think there iss some whisky in the house—"

The younger man burst into a bitter laugh.

"Whisky! Iss it whisky ? I hef come after the whisky! Indeed and mirover that would be a fine day the day I tasted a glass of your whisky; for there iss no man alife in Darroch or in Killeena too that effer had a glass of whisky from *you*, John Fergus!"

At this deadly insult the older man, with something of an inarticulate cry of rage, darted forward, and would have seized his opponent had not Moira thrown herself between them.

"Father," the trembling girl said, putting her hands on his breast, "keep back—keep back for a minute, and I will tell you—indeed it wass not the whisky that Angus M'Eachran will come for—it wass a message there wass from Miss Sheila Mackenzie—and he will hear of it from the minister—and he will come into the house for a minute—and there wass no harm in that. It iss your own house, father—you will not harm a man in your own house—"

He thrust her aside.

"Angus M'Eachran," said he, "this iss what I will say to you—you wass saying to yourself this many a day back that you will marry this lass here. I tell you now, by Kott, you will not marry her—not this year, nor the next year, nor many a year after that. And there iss more ass I hef to say to you. This house iss no house for you; and if it iss any day I will come into the house and you will be here, it will be a bad day that day for you, by Kott."

"That iss ferry well said," retorted the younger man, whose eyes were afire, but who kept himself outwardly calm, "and this iss what I will say to you, John Fergus. The day may come to you that you will be ferry glad for me to come into your house, and you will be ferry sore in your heart that you wass saying such things to me this day. And I will say this to you—do you think it iss the fighting will keep me out of the house? Wass you thinking I wass afrait of you? By Kott, John Fergus, two men like you would not mek me afrait; and that day will be a bad day for you that you tek to fighting with me."

The girl was once more for interfering with her entreaties.

"No, Moira," said her lover, "stand back—I am

for no fighting—if there iss fighting it iss not in a man's own house that iss the place for fighting. But this iss what I will say to you, John Fergus, that you hef no need to fear that I will come to your house. No, not if I wass living for thirty or twenty years in Ardtilleach will I come into your house—neffer, as I am a living man."

And that vow he kept.

CHAPTER V.

THE WEDDING.

The "Princess Sheila" lay at her moorings in the bay; and the morning sunlight shone on her tall and shapely masts and on the gleaming white decks. It was a lonely part of the coast of Darroch; there was not another vessel on the smooth plain of the sea; far away in the direction of some rocks a couple of seals were alternately raising their heads above the water—like the black head of a man—as if in wonder over this invasion of their silent haunts. Beautiful, indeed, was the morning of Moira Fergus's marriage. The water around the shore was so calm and so clear that one could distinguish the sand and the white star-fish at an extraordinary depth. The sea was of a light blue fading into grey at the horizon. The sky was of a darker blue; and the almost motionless clouds dappled the sunlit shoulders of the hills and the wide expanse of the moorland.

About ten o'clock a pinnace put off from the yacht, and the quiet bay echoed the sound of the rowlocks as the four sturdy seamen pulled into the land. They ran her by the side of some loose stones that served for a rude landing-jetty; and then Mr. and Mrs. Lavender stepped on shore. The former was certainly not in proper wedding attire, for he had on his ordinary boating-suit of blue homespun; but the young lady wore a yachting-costume which had been designed by her husband, and which was the wonder of all the islands around. The old women who had seen Miss Sheila, as they mostly called her, but once in this costume had many a long story to tell about it over the peat fire to their neighbours who had not been so fortunate; and it was gravely doubted whether the wife of Sir James, or the wife of the Duke of Argyll, or even the Queen herself had such a wonderful dress and hat and gloves.

They walked up and over the rough shingle, until they reached a path skirting some low sand-hills, and this they followed along the shore until they reached the manse. The minister was at the door; he came out bare-headed to receive them; there was a great dignity in his speech.

"Well, are the young folks here?" said Sheila.

"Yes, indeed and mirover," said the minister,

"and it will be a proud day for them that you will sign the marriage lines, Mrs. Laffenter, and you, sir, too. And I hef got the horse for you, Mrs. Laffenter, if you will be determined to go to Ardtilleach. And I hef peen told that the English hef two dinners in the day, which is a strange thing to me, but it iss no pusiness of mine whateffer; and you will be so long in England every year, Mrs. Laffenter, that you will hef gone away from the way you used to live at home; but if you wass so kind, now, ass to tek the first dinner—that iss at one o'clock—in my poor house, it would be a proud day for me too. And it iss no ferry fine dinner I hef, but some mutton just ass goot as you will get it in London; and I hef some ferry goot whisky—there iss no petter apout here. And if you wass so kind, Miss—Mrs. Laffenter—"

"Certainly, Mr. MacDonald," said Mr. Lavender, interposing; "we will dine with you at one, on condition you dine with us at seven—that is, if we can get back from Ardtilleach by that time. You must try the English way of having two dinners—you may call the second one supper, if you like. Now don't let us keep the young people waiting."

Angus M'Eachran and Moira Fergus were seated in the minister's parlour, both of them very silent. When Mrs. Lavender entered the room, the girl

rose hastily, as if she would rush forward to thank her; then she paused, and seemed to shrink back.

"And are you ferry well, Moira?" said Mrs. Lavender, advancing and holding out her hand. "And do you remember the last time I saw you at Ardtilleach?"

The girl, trembling a good deal, made a curtsey, and timidly took the hand that was offered to her.

"It iss no words I hef this tay—to thank you," she said, "that you will come to the wedding of a poor lass—for Angus M'Eachran he wass wanting me to tek the money to get the clothes for the wedding, but if I had got the clothes for the wedding, it wass effery one in Ardtilleach would know of it. And—and—that iss why I hef not the clothes for the wedding."

It was an apology. Moira was ashamed of her rough clothes, that were not fit for a wedding to which Miss Sheila Mackenzie of Borva had come. But Sheila made her sit down, and sate down beside her, and talked to her of many things, so that there was soon an end to her shamefacedness.

"Mr. MacDonald," said Angus M'Eachran, rather anxiously—seeing that the minister was thinking more of his distinguished guests than of the business in hand, "if you wass ass kind ass to be quick—for

it iss Moira's father if he wass to go back to the house, he might hef some thought of it."

"Ay, ay," said the minister, recollecting himself. "Where is Isabal?"

He called his housekeeper into the room; she was smartly dressed, and she wore a gold chain that her son had sent her from America. The minister now grew formal in his manner. He spoke in a solemn and low voice. He directed Angus M'Eachran and Moira Fergus to stand up together; and then, with a closed Bible in his hand, he placed himself before them, the three witnesses of the ceremony standing on one side. The light from the small window fell on the young Highland girl's face—she was now very pale, and she kept her eyes bent on the floor.

He began by offering up a prayer—a strange, rambling series of Biblical quotations, of entreaties, of exhortations addressed to those before him—which was at once earnest, pathetic, and grotesque. Mr. MacDonald would rather have prayed in the Gaelic; but the presence of the strangers led him to speak in English, which was obviously a difficulty to him. For into this curious prayer he introduced a sort of history and justification of what he had done with regard to the young people.

"Ay," he said, "it wass to Glassgow they were going, and they would hef peen as sheeps in the den

of the lions, and as the young lambs among the wolves. For it iss written of Babylon the evil city, Lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of the great nations from ta north country, ay, and Chaldea shall be a spoil. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round apout; all ye that will pend the pow shoot at her, ay, and spare no arrows, for she has sinned against the Lord! And it wass to Glassgow they were going; and it wass no man could hear that and not safe them from going. And we had the great help of frients from far islands, ay, from the desolate places of the islands, and they came to us in our trouple, and it wass a great help they would gife to us, and the Lord will tek that into account, and reward them for the help they hef given to the young lad and the young lass that iss before us this tay."

Then he went on to denounce anger and evil passions as the cause of much of human trouble; and he closed his prayer with an earnest hope that Divine influence would soften the heart of John Fergus, and lead him to live in peace and affection with his daughter and her husband.

The exhortation following the prayer was shorter than the prayer. It referred chiefly to the duties of married life; but even here Mr. MacDonald brought in a good deal of justification of his own conduct in

having assisted a young lad and a young lass to get married.

"Ay, ay," said he, "it iss written that a man shall leaf his father and his mother and ko and be joined unto his wife; and the wife, too, she will do the same, as it hass peen from the peginning of the worlt. Amen. And why no? And if there iss any man so foolish ass to say to a young man or a young lass, 'No, you will hef to wait until I die before you will be for getting marriet, and until I die you will not be for getting marriet at all,' I will say to him that he is a foolish man, and a man who has no sense in his head whateffer. And there iss too much of the young men going away from the islands apout us, and they will go away to Glassgow, and to Greenock, and to America, and to other places, and they will marry wives there, and who iss to know what kind of wifes they will marry? No, it is petter, ay, and ferry much petter, for a young man to hef seen a young lass in the years of her young tays, and he will know of her family, and he will hef seen her going to the church, and he will know she is a fit lass to be a wife for him and no strange woman that hass lifed in a great town, where there are wild men, and sodgers, and the Roman Catholic priests."

Presently the simple ceremony had to be performed; and when Angus M'Eachran was bidden to

take the young girl's hand, and when the minister demanded to know if any one were present who had aught to say against the marriage of these two there was a silence as if every one was listening for the sound of a footstep on the gravel outside.

There was no answer to that summons; wherever John Fergus was, he was certainly not in the neighbourhood of Mr. MacDonald's manse.

"And so you are a married woman, Moira," said Sheila, when it was all over.

The girl could not speak, but there were big tears in her eyes, and she went forward and took Mrs. Lavender's hand and timidly kissed it. Angus M'Eachran had been standing about, silent and awkward; at length he, too, went forward, and said in desperation,—

"Mrs. Laffenter, it iss a ferry goot pair of oars for a small poat I hef made last week at Ardtilleach. Will I send you the oars to Borva?"

"Oh, no, Angus," the young lady said; "that is ferry kind of you, but we have plenty of oars at Borva. But this is what I will be glad if you will do—it is a ferry good carpenter they say you are, and any day you have the time to make a small boat for a boy that he will be able to pull about with a string, then I will be ferry glad to have the boat from you."

"Ay," said Angus, with his face brightening,

"and will you tek the poat? Ay, ay, you will gife me time to mek the poat, and I will be ferry proud the day that you will tek the poat from me."

Then he turned to the minister.

"And, Mr. MacDonald," said he, rather shamefacedly, "if you will not be ferry angry, there iss a gallon of goot whisky—oh, ay, it iss ferry goot whisky, I hef peen told—and I will pring it over this morning when I wass coming ofer, and I hef left it out in the heather—"

"You hef left it out in the heather!" said the minister angrily; "and it iss a foolish man you are, Angus M'Eachran, to go and leaf a gallon of goot whisky out on the heather? And where is the heather? And maybe you will go now and get it out of the heather?"

"I wass afrait to say apout it pefore," Angus said. "But I will go and get you the whisky, and it iss ferry proud I am that you will tak the whisky—and it iss not ferry bad whisky mirover."

As soon as Angus had gone off to the hiding-place of the jar, they all went outside into the clear air, which was fresh with the sea breeze and sweet with the smell of the peats.

"Sheila," said Mr. Lavender, "can you hurry on Mr. MacDonald's housekeeper? The great work of

the day has to be done yet. And there will be little time to cross to Ardtilleach."

"Oh, Mrs. Laffenter!" cried Moira. "You will not go to see my father!"

"Indeed, I will," said Sheila. "Are you afraid he will eat me, Moira?"

"I am afraid—I do not know what I am afraid of—except that you will not go to him, that iss all I ask from you, Mrs. Laffenter—"

"The teffle—" exclaimed Mr. MacDonald fiercely, and then he recollected in whose society he was. "What iss it will keep Mrs. Laffenter from speaking to any one? Your father iss an angry man, Moira Fergus—ay, you will be Moira M'Eachran now—he iss a ferry angry man—but will he use his pad language to Mrs. Laffenter? It iss not to be thought of, Moira!"

At this moment the yellow-bearded young fisherman came back with the jar of whisky; and he blushed a little as he handed the little present to the minister.

"Ay," said Mr. MacDonald, going into the house. "Isabal must be ferry quick, for it iss a long way the way to Ardtilleach, and the second dinner of the tay it will be on poard the yacht at eight o'clock or seven o'clock, or petween poth of the two. And Isabal she must go town to the yacht and tell that

tall Duncan of Mr. Mackenzie's to gife her the sattle for Mrs. Laffenter's horse."

It was with great difficulty that they could persuade Angus and Moira to come into the house and sit down at the table with the great people from Borvabost. Mr. MacDonald of himself could never have managed it; but Sheila took Moira by the hand and led her into the room, and then the young husband silently followed.

The minister had been too modest in speaking of the banquet he had had prepared for his guests. He had promised them but mutton and whisky; and, behold! there was a bottle of claret-wine on the table, and the very first dish was the head and shoulders of a magnificent salmon.

"Well, that is a fine fish!" said Mr. Lavender, regarding its mighty proportions.

"Oh, ay," said the minister, immensely flattered. "He wass a fine fish—a grand fish. He wass ass big as a dog—and more."

It was a great grief to the minister that Mr. Lavender would not taste of the claret, which had come all the way from Stornoway, and was of so excellent a vintage that it was named after the Prime Minister in Parliament himself. But Sheila had some of it in a tumbler, and pronounced it very good; though the minister observed that "there wass no

great strength to go to the head in the French wines," and he "wass ferry much surprised to see that Mrs. Laffenter would hef water with the claret-wine."

"And I hear that Angus is going to build a cottage for you, Moira," said Mrs. Lavender, "further removed from the village and the curing-houses. That will be ferry good for you; and it is not every one that has a husband who can work at two trades, and be a good fisherman on the sea, and a good carpenter on shore. And I suppose you will be going back now to the house that he has at present."

"Ay, that iss the worst of it," said the girl sadly. "If my father iss ferry angry, it will be a pad thing that we will hef to lif in Ardtilleach together; and all the neighbours will know that he is angry, and he will hef the long story to tell to each of them."

"But you must not look at it that way," her counsellor said cheerfully. "You will soon get over your father's anger; and the neighbours—well, the neighbours are likely to take your side of the story, if there is a story. Now, you must keep up your spirits, Moira; it is a bad thing for a young wife to be downhearted, for a man will soon tire of that, because he may not understand the cause of it. And why should you be downhearted? I dare say,

now, that when you come over to Ardtilleach—you will not be long after us, I suppose—you will find the neighbours ready to hef a dance over the wedding as soon as the evening comes on."

As there was little time to be lost on the part of those who were coming back the same evening to the yacht, the small and shaggy animal that was to carry Mrs. Lavender to Ardtilleach was brought round to the door. The young bride and bridegroom, with somewhat wistful eyes, saw their ambassadress set out, her husband walking smartly by her side.

"It iss a great thing they hef undertaken to do," said the minister, "ay, and if they cannot do it, there iss not any one in all the islands will be able to do it."

CHAPTER VI.

HABET!

About one o'clock of the day on which Moira Fergus was married, her father returned home from the curing-house for his dinner. He was surprised to find no one inside the small cottage. There were the usual preparations, certainly—a loaf of bread and a jug of milk on the side-table, and the big black pot hung high over the smouldering peats. He was angry that she should not be there; but he had no thought of what had occurred.

In a sullen mood he proceeded to get for himself his dinner. He lowered the black pot and raked up the peats; then, when the steam began to rise, he helped himself, and sate down to the table. Moira should pay for this.

But by and by, as the time passed, and there was no Moira, he began to be suspicious; and he had not well finished his dinner when he started off,

with a dark look on his face, for the cottage in which Angus M'Eachran lived. There was an old woman who acted in some measure the part of cook and housekeeper for Angus—a bent, shrivelled old woman, more sulky even than John Fergus himself.

"Is Angus M'Eachran in the house?" said he, in the Gaelic.

"Is Angus M'Eachran in the house!" she retorted contemptuously.

"I ask you if he is in the house!" he said angrily.

"And it is a foolish man you are to ask such a question!" the old woman said, quite as fiercely. "As if a young man will be in the house in the middle of the day, when all the young men will be at the fishing."

With a petulant oath, Fergus went past her and walked into the cottage. There was no one inside.

Then, with his suspicions growing momentarily stronger, he walked away from Ardtilleach, until, at one point of the coast, he reached the school which did service for the whole of the island. He went inside and spoke to the schoolmaster, Alister Lewis; and Moira's younger sisters were called aside and questioned. They knew nothing of her.

Then he went back to Ardtilleach, and by this

t ime there wasa great commotion in the village, for it was known that Moira Fergus could not be found, and that her father was seeking everywhere for her. The old women came out of the hovels, and the old men came in from the potato fields, and the small children listened, wondering, but understanding nothing.

"Ay, ay, it iss a ferry angry man he is, and the young lass will hef many a hard word from him; and if she will go away, what iss the reason of it that she should not go away?" said one.

"And there iss no finer lad in the islands than Angus M'Eachran," said another; "and him ferry goot at mendin' a poat, and ferry goot at the fishin' too and mirover; and it iss a foolish man John Fergus iss that he will think the lass will never marry."

"Ay, ay," said one old man, coming up with an armful of smoke-saturated roofing, which he was about to carry to one of the small fields, "and iss it known that Angus M'Eachran will not go out with the poat this morning, and young Tonald Neil, he will go out with the poat, and that wass what I will see myself when I wass coming from Harrabost."

This was news indeed, and it was made the basis of a thousand conjectures. Moira Fergus and Angus M'Eachran had gone away from Darroch,

and caught up one of the schooners making for the Lewis. They were on their way to Stornoway; and from Stornoway they would go to Glasgow or America; and John Fergus would see his daughter Moira no more.

When John Fergus made his appearance, these gossipers were silent, for there was anger on his face, and they feared him.

"You hef not seen Moira?" said he.

"No," answered one and all.

"Hef you seen Angus M'Eachran, then?"

"This iss what I will tell you, John Fergus," said the old man, who had laid down his bundle of black straw. "It wass Tonald Neil he will be for going out this morning in the poat, and Angus M'Eachran he wass not in the poat, and it iss many a one will say now that if Angus M'Eachran and Moira hef gone away to Styornoway—"

"They hef not gone to Styornoway!" exclaimed Fergus. "It iss a fool that you are, Peter Taggart, to speak of Styornoway!"

But at this moment the group of idlers was moved by a new surprise; for who should appear at the further end of the village than the daughter of Mr. Mackenzie, the king of the far island of Borva, and she was coming along on horseback, with her husband, a tall young Englishman, by her side.

What could this wonderful portent mean? Were they on their way to visit Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, who was a clever man and a travelled man, and had been to Stornoway, and Glasgow, and other distant places.

They saw her, while as yet she was some distance off, dismount from the horse, and then her husband led the animal until he found a post, to which he tied the bridle. Then these two came along together, and the village people thought she resembled a queen, and had the dress of a queen, and the air of a queen.

"And where is the house of John Fergus?" said she, when she came up, to an old woman.

The old woman was rather taken aback by this great honour, and she hurriedly dropped a curtsey, and exclaimed,—

"Ay, iss it John Fergus? And here is John Fergus himself!"

Moira's father was standing apart, with sullen brows. He had a dim suspicion that this unexpected visit had something to do with the disappearance of his daughter.

"Mr. Fergus," said Sheila, going forward to him, and speaking to him in a low voice, "it is a long time since I hef been at Ardtilleach, and I had forgotten you."

"Ay," said he, not very courteously.

"But I had not forgotten your daughter Moira."

There was a quick, suspicious glance in the deep-set eyes; the man said nothing.

"Now, Mr. Fergus, I am going to ask you to be a kind man and a reasonable man this day. And it is a very simple thing I hef to tell you. It was last week that Mr. MacDonald, the minister, came to Borva, and he was saying that Angus M'Eachran and your daughter Moira, they would like to be married, and that you were against it—"

"Iss it against it you will say?" he broke in fiercely. "I would like to see—"

"Let me speak to you, Mr. Fergus," said the young lady gently. "Well, Angus and Moira did not see any use in waiting, for they knew you would never consent, and I believe they had determined to run away from Darroch and go to Glasgow—"

"And hef they gone to Glasgow?" demanded Fergus, in a voice that was heard even by the neighbours, who had remained at a respectful distance.

"No, they hef not. The minister thought, and I thought, that would be a very bad thing. I said you were a reasonable man, Mr. Fergus, and I would go to you to speak with you, and you would

listen to it, and you would understand that a young girl does no wrong in thinking of getting married—"

"Where iss Moira?" said he suddenly. "You —you hef taken her away—ay, that iss it—it iss a ferry grand laty you are, but if you hef taken away Moira Fergus—"

"Mr. Fergus," said Sheila's husband, stepping forward, "I'd strongly advise you to be a little more civil."

"And you!" said he, turning fiercely on this new assailant, "what iss it to you that I will hef command ofer my own house? And what iss it to you to come and touch such things? And I say to you, where iss Moira?"

Mr. Lavender would have replied, and, doubtless, with injudicious vehemence, but Sheila interposed.

"I will tell you where she is, Mr. Fergus," she said quietly. "Now you will be a reasonable man, and you will see how it is better to make the best of what is done; and Moira is a good lass, and—and—she is coming now to Ardtilleach, and Angus too, and it was over at Mr. MacDonald's manse to-day they were—and you will be a reasonable man, Mr. Fergus—"

"At the manse!" he cried, seeing the whole thing. "And they were married?"

"Well, yes, indeed, Mr. Fergus—"

At this confirmation of his suspicions his rage became quite uncontrollable, and he suddenly broke upon Sheila with a flood of vituperation in Gaelic. Her husband could not understand a word, but he saw the girl retreat a step, with her face pale.

He sprang forward.

"Speak English, you hound, or I'll kick you down to the shore and back again!" he cried.

"Iss it English?" Fergus shouted in his rage. "Iss it English? Ay, it iss the English thiefs coming about the islands to steal when the door is left open! And it iss you, Sheila Mackenzie, it iss you that will answer for this—"

In his ungovernable passion he had raised his clenched fist in the air, and inadvertently he advanced a step. Probably he had not the least intention in the world of striking Sheila, but the threatening gesture was quite enough for her husband; so that, quick as lightning, he dealt John Fergus a blow right on the forehead which sent him staggering backward until he tripped and fell heavily. There was a scream from the old women, who came running forward to the prostrate man. Mr. Lavender turned to his wife, his face a trifle pale.

"Are your nerves fluttered, Sheila?" he said.

"Come over to this bench here, and sit down. Will you have a drop of whisky?"

Sheila was indeed trembling; she suffered herself to be led to the wooden bench, and there she sate down.

"Have you hurt him?" she said, in a low voice.

"Certainly," said he. "I have hurt him, and my own knuckles as well. But he'll come to, all right. Don't you mind him."

Mr. Lavender walked back to the group of people. John Fergus was sitting up in the middle of the road, looking considerably dazed.

"Here, some of you folks, get me a drop of whisky, and a clean glass, and some water."

The request was attended to at once.

"Well, John Fergus," said Mr. Lavender, "you'll keep a more civil tongue in your head next time I pay you a visit."

He went back to his wife and prevailed on her to take a little whisky and water to steady her nerves.

"It is a bad thing you hef done," she said sadly. "He will never forgive them now."

"He never would have forgiven them," replied the husband. "I saw that at once. Your appeals were only making him more frantic. Besides, do you think I would allow, in any case, a cantankerous

old fool like that to swear at you in his beast of a language?"

"You did not know he was swearing."

"I knew very well."

"And what shall we do now?"

"Why, go back again—that's all. We shall meet the young folks on the road."

"We cannot go away till you see how John Fergus is."

"Oh, John Fergus is right enough—see, there he goes, slinking off to one of the cottages, probably his own. A little rest will do him good, and let his temper cool. Now, Sheila, pull yourself together; you've got to entertain a distinguished guest on board the yacht this evening, and we must not lose time."

Sheila rose and took her husband's arm. As they walked along to the post where the horse was tied, the villagers came up to them, and more than one said,—

"Ay, ay, sir, it wass ferry well done, and a ferry goot thing whateffer, that you will teach John Fergus to keep a civil tongue, and he is a ferry coorse man, and no one will dare to say anything to him. Ay, and to think that he would speak like that to Miss Sheila Mackenzie—it wass well done, ay, and ferry well done."

"But he is not hurt?" Sheila said.

"Well, he iss hurt, ay, and he iss not hurt; but he will be going to lie down, and when he gets up again, then there will be nothing; but he iss ferry wake on the legs, and there iss no more anger now for the rest of this day whateffer."

So Mr. and Mrs. Lavender went away from Ardtilleach, the latter rather downhearted over the failure of her enterprise, the former endeavouring to convince her that that might have been expected, and that no great harm had been done. Indeed, when, in crossing the lonely moorland road, they saw Angus M'Eachran and Moira Fergus at a great distance, coming toward them, Sheila "lifted up her voice and wept," and it was in vain that her husband tried to comfort her. She dismounted from the saddle, and sate down on a block of silver-grey granite by the roadside, to await Moira's coming; and, when the young Highland girl came up, she could scarcely speak to her. Moira was infinitely perturbed to see this great lady grieved because of her, and, when she heard all that had happened, she said sadly,—

"But that iss what I hef expected, and there wass no other thing that I hef expected. If there wass any chance of getting a smooth word from my father, do you think, Mrs. Laffenter, that Angus

M'Eachran and me we would be for going away to Glassgow ?"

"It is a bad home-coming after the wedding that you will hef," said her friend.

"Yes, indeed, but we hef looked for that; and it iss a great thing you hef done for us, Mrs. Laffenter, in coming all the way from Borva to the wedding; but we will not forget that; and it will be remembered in the island for many a day. And now you will be for going on to the manse, Mrs. Laffenter."

"Moira," said her friend, "we are going away to London in a day or two now, and I would like to hef a word from you, and you or Angus will send me a letter, to tell me what is going on in Darroch."

"Indeed, yes," said Angus, "and they will know you ferry well in London if we send the letter, or iss there more ass one of the same name in London ?"

"You must have the address," said Mr. Lavender, getting out a card.

"Oh, I know the attress ferry well," said the young fisherman; "iss there any one so foolish ass not to know where London iss ? And they will tek the letter ferry well ?"

"Yes, but you must put more than London on the letter, for there are more people in a street in

London than in all Darroch and Killeena, and there are as many streets as there are stones in your house, Angus."

He looked at the card as if it were some strange talisman; then he put it in his pocket; there was a little hand-shaking, and the bride and bridegroom went on their way.

"Moira!" Mrs. Lavender called out suddenly.

The girl turned and came back; she was met half way by her friend, who had a great sympathy and sadness in her eyes.

"It is ferry sorry for you I am this day," said Sheila, in a low voice, "and there is not anything I would not do to hef got for you a better home-coming. And you will speak to your father, Moira —not now, when he is in his anger—but afterwards, and perhaps he will see that what is done is done, and he will be friends with you."

"I will try that, Mrs. Laffenter," said the girl.

"And you will send me a letter to London?"

"Oh, ay, I will send you the letter to London, and it will be a proud day for me the day that I will send you a letter; and you will not say a word of it to any one, Mrs. Laffenter, if there iss not the ferry goot English in the letter, for it iss Angus he can write the goot English petter ass me."

"Your English will be good enough, Moira," said her friend. "Good-bye."

So again they parted; and that was the last these two saw of each other for many long days and months.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST CLOUD.

It was well on in the afternoon when Angus M'Eachran and his young wife reached Ardtilleach; and by that time one or two of the boats had come in from the ling fishing; so that there were a good many people about. And there was a great commotion in the place over the news of what had happened—a commotion such as had not shaken Ardtilleach since the foundering of the French schooner on Harrabost Head. Moreover, two or three of the young fellows took solemn oath in the Gaelic that they would not allow Angus M'Eachran's wedding to pass over without a dance and a dram, whatever was thought of it by John Fergus, who remained sullen, sour, and ashamed in his own home.

There was a great deal of hand-shaking when the bride and bridegroom arrived; and many were the

good wishes expressed by the old women about the future of Moira. The young girl was grateful; but her eyes kept wandering about the place, apparently seeking for her father.

There was no time to organize a great entertainment, as was done when Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, married Ailasa MacDonald, a young lass from Killeena; but one of the curers—the very curer, indeed, who was John Fergus's master—came forward in a handsome manner, and said that if two or three of the young fellows would begin and roll some barrels aside, he would tender the use of his curing-house, so that some frugal supper and a dance might be possible. This was done in due time, and Angus's companions set to work to hold some little feast in his honour. One went away, declaring that he would himself, as sure as he was a living man, bring six gallons of whisky to the curing-house. Another, a famous musician, went off for his fiddle. Another declared that it would be a shame, and a very great shame, if Alister Lewis were not told of the approaching celebration, and immediately set out for the school-house. Then the boys about obtained permission from old Donald Neil to gather the potato-shaws out of his field, and these they brought to the point of the shore outside the curing-house, so that, when night came, a mighty

bonfire and beacon should tell even the ships out at sea that great doings were going on on land.

Angus M'Eachran was very proud of all this, and very glad to be among his own people again. The ceremony over there at the Free Church Manse had rather frightened him; now he felt at home; and, having drunk a glass or two, he was as anxious for a dance as any one. But with Moira the case was very different. Of all the crowd, she was the only one who was anxious, sad, and preoccupied. She had none of the quick laughter of a bride.

"Ay, and what iss the matter with you, Moira?" said her husband.

"There iss nothing the matter with me, Angus," she replied; but the wistful and anxious look did not depart from her face.

Well, there was not much of a supper that night, and, indeed, many did not go into the curing-house at all, but remained outside, where dancing had already begun on a rocky plateau, covered with short sea-grass. It was a lovely night—the wonderful glow of the northern twilight shining over the dark heavens, and the stars gradually becoming more distinct on the smooth surface of the sea. There was a fresher air out here on the rocks than in the heated curing-house, and the whisky was as good outside as in.

Then a great shout arose, for the boys had put a light to the bonfire, and presently the long, lithe tongues of fire began to leap up, while the young men took to performing feats of jumping through the flames. In the excitement of the moment the curer, who had had a glass, became reckless, and ordered the boys to bring a heap of driftwood from the curing-house. Then, indeed, there was a bonfire —such a bonfire as the shores of Darroch and Killeena had never seen before. There was a great noise and confusion, of course, friend calling to friend, and the old women trying to prevent the boys from springing through the flames.

In the midst of all this noise Moira slipped away from the side of her husband. She had been inside the curing-house, and there her health and the health of her husband had been loyally drunk, and she had gone round the whole company, shaking hands with each, while she said "Shlainte!" and put her lips to the whisky. The cry of "The fire!" of course called every one out, and in the crowd she was separated from her husband. She seized this opportunity.

The great red glare was shining athwart the hollows in the rocks, and even lighting up palely the fronts of the cottages of Ardtilleach, so that she had not much fear for her footing as she passed over

to the road. There seemed to be no one left in Ardtilleach. There was not a sound to be heard—nothing but the distant voices of the people calling to each other round the bonfire. All the fishermen, and the young women, and the old folks, and the children had gone out to the point.

Moira went rapidly along the cottages till she came to her father's, her heart beating hurriedly. When she reached the door a cry of fright had nearly escaped her, for there was her father—his face partly lit up by the reflection of the red light—sternly regarding her. He did not move to let her pass into the house. He did not say a word to her; he only looked at her as if she were a dog, a boat, a piece of stone. Rather than this terrible reception, she would have had him break out into a fury of rage.

She was not prepared for it; and after the first wild look of entreaty, she turned her eyes to the ground, and stood there, trembling and speechless.

"Hef you no word for me?" she said at length.

"None!" he answered.

He seemed to be regarding the distant bonfire, its long shoots of flame into the black night, and the alternate dusky and red figures moving round it.

"It wass many a time," she began, in desperation,

hoping to make some excuse; "it wass many a time, I will say to you—"

"I hef no word for you, Moira Fergus," her father said with apparent indifference. "You hef gone away; you will stay away. It iss a disgrace you hef brought on yourself and your family—"

"A disgrace!" she cried. "And what are the people doing, then, if they think it iss a disgrace I hef made? That iss not in the thoughts of any one of them."

"The people!" said her father, for a second forgetting his forced composure. "And the teffle knows what the people will be after—it iss the whiskey; and after they hef the whisky they will go home, and to-morrow what will they say of you, Moira Fergus?"

"They will say no harm of me," the girl said. "But you, yourself, father, you will say no harm of me; and if we can be friends, and Angus will come to you and say—"

"Do you hear what I hef told you?" said he fiercely. "I hef no word to speak to you—no, not if you wass to lif in Ardtilleach for sixty years. To-morrow you will be to me as if you wass dead; to-morrow, and the next day, and all the years after that. You hef gone away; ay, and you shall stay away, Moira Fergus! I hef no more speaking for

you, nor for Angus M'Eachran; and it iss a foolish man Angus M'Eachran will be if he comes near me or my house."

"Father—only this—"

"I tell you, Moira Fergus, to go away; or, by Kott, I will tek you, and I will trag you out to the curing-house, and put you among your trunken frients! That iss what I will do, by Kott!"

His vehemence frightened her; she went back a step, and then she looked at him. He turned and went inside the cottage. Then there was nothing for the girl but to go back to her friends, whose shouts still resounded through the silence of the night.

"Ay, and where hef you been, Moira?" her husband said, he alone having noticed her absence.

"I wass down to my father's house," she answered sadly.

"And what will he say to you?"

"He hass no word for me. To-morrow, and the next day, and all the time after that, I will be just as one that iss dead to him; ay, ay, sure enough."

"And what of that?" her husband said. "Tit you not know that pefore? And what iss the harm of it? It is a ferry goot thing indeed and mirover that you will be away from a coorse man, that wass ferry terriple to you and to all his neighbours. And

it iss ferry little you hef to complain apout, Moira; and now you will come and hef a tance."

"It iss not any tance I will be thinking about," said the girl.

He became a little impatient.

"In the name of Kott, what iss it you will want, Moira! It iss a strange thing to hef a young lass going apout ferry sorrowful on the tay of her wedding. And it iss many a one will say that you are not ferry glad of the wedding."

That was true enough. It was remarked that, whereas everybody was ready for a dance and a song, only Moira seemed to care nothing for the dance and the song. But the old women knew the reason of it; and one said to the other,—

"Ay, ay, it iss a hard thing for a young lass to go away from her own home to get marriet, and it iss ferry strange she will be for a time, and then she will heed that no more. But Moira Fergus, it iss ferry pad for Moira Fergus that her father iss a coorse and a wild man, and she will hef no chance of being frients with him any more; and the young lass—well, she is a young lass—and that will trouple a young lass, indeed and mirover."

But these shrewd experiences had no hold of Angus M'Eachran. His quick Celtic temperament resented the affront put upon him, on his very

wedding day, by the girl whom he had married. The neighbours saw she was anything but glad; and the young man had it in his heart to say, "Moira, if you are sorry for the wedding, I am too; and sorrier still that I cannot go and have it undone." He moved away from her.

By this time the tumult round the bonfire had subsided, for now nothing but smouldering ashes were left, and the people had formed again into dancing groups, and talking groups, and drinking groups—perhaps the first two ought to be included in the third. Angus M'Eachran would not dance at all; but he had recovered his temper, and once or twice he went and said a friendly word to Moira, who was standing with some of the old women looking on at the reels. But what had fired this other young fellow to call out,—

"Hey! there is one man not here this day, and, by Kott, he ought to be here this day. And he iss a foolish man and a madman that will stay at home when his own daughter is being married!"

"Ay, ay!" said two or three.

"And this iss what I say," continued the fisherman, who had evidently had a glass. "I am going ofer to John Fergus's house!"

"Ay, and me too," responded one or two of his companions.

"And we will hef a joke with him," cried one.

"Ay, ay, and we will hef him out!" cried another.

"We will put a light to his thatch!" cried a third. "And you will see if John Fergus will not come out to his daughter's wedding!"

At this, Moira darted forward before them.

"If there iss one of you," she said in an excited way, "if there iss one of you will go near to my father's house this night, this iss what I will do—I will go and jump ofer the rock there into the water."

"Ay, ay," said her husband, coming forward rather gloomily, "it iss no use the having a joke with John Fergus. Let John Fergus alone. If he will not come out to his daughter's wedding, that is nothing to any one—it iss a ferry goot thing there are others that hef come to the wedding, and ass for John Fergus, he will be ferry welcome to stay at home this night, or the next night, or the next fife huntret years, and tam him!"

So that matter passed over, and the merrymaking was resumed—the fiddler having illimitable calls on him, and the very oldest determined to show that they had not altogether lost the use of toe and heel. There was no lack of whisky; and altogether the improvised entertainment in honour of the wedding of Moira Fergus became a notable and memorable

thing. But there were two or three present who remarked that Moira looked very sorrowful; and that Angus M'Eachran was not so well pleased with her as a husband should be with his newly-married wife.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN INTERMEDDLER.

John Fergus kept his word: his daughter was as one dead to him. When he passed her in the village, he had neither look nor speech for her; and then she went home with a heavy heart. At first her husband tried to reason with her about her unavailing silence and sadness; but he soon got tired of that, and impatient, and glad to be out with his companions in the boat, or on the beach, where a laugh and a joke was possible.

"What, in the name of Kott, iss the use of it, Moira?" he would say to her, when he was near losing his temper. "Hef you not known all along that your father, John Fergus, would hef no word for you if you was to go and get married? Hef I not told you that? And it wass many a time you will say to me, 'Angus, I cannot stay longer in the house with my father;' and then I hef said to you,

'Moira, it will be a ferry tifferent thing when you hef a house to yourself, and you will be the mistress of the house and no one will speak a coorse word to you.' And now you hef no more thought of that—you hef no more thought of anything but your father—and this iss what I will say to you, Moira, that no man hass the patience with a wife who iss discontented from the morning to the night, and it iss many's the time I hef wished you could go back to your father—and tam him!"

In due course of time, and in fulfilment of her promise, Moira sate down one day and wrote a letter to Mrs. Lavender, who was still in London. This letter she brought to her husband, asking him to address it for her, and hinting that he might look through it, for she was better at spelling the Gaelic than the English. Angus got a pen and sate down.

He had not read far when an angry light came to his eyes. Moira's letter to her friend was not the letter which a young wife might be expected to write. It was very sad and mournful; and it was all about her father, and the impossibility of conciliating him. There was not a word in it of her husband, or of his project of building a cottage with a slate roof, or of the recent state of the fishing around the coast. It was all her father, and her

father, and her father; and the young fisherman's face grew dark. Finding that she had gone outside, he got another piece of paper and wrote as follows:—

"This is what Moira haz to tell to you, Mrs. Laffenter, and this is all she haz to tell to you, and it is not ferra much whatever. But there is another word I would say to you that Moira haz not said, and when a man marries a wife, it is not to be triffen out of the house that he will marry a wife, and this is what haz come to us, that Moira she will think nothing of from the morning to the night but the quarrel with John Fergus, and it is not any other thing she will think of, and there is no man will haf the patience with that. And that is how we are, Mrs. Laffenter, and you will not trouple yourself to say a word of it to Moira, for I haf said a great many things to her; but it is no use there is in them, and all the day she will haf no word for me, and no laugh or a joke like a young lass, and it is the Gott's mercy there will be one or two young men about or I would go away to Glassgow indeed and mirover. And you waz ferra kind to us, Mrs. Laffenter, and it is no great gladness I haf in telling you the story, but I waz thinking if you got Moira's letter you would be for writing to John Fergus, and there will be no use in that at all. And I am your

obedient servant to command, Angus M'Eachran. The feshen haz been ferra good round about Darroch since you waz here, but a man haz no heart to go to the feshen when he comes back to a discontented house."

He did not show Moira that second letter—he knew that remonstrance was of no avail; he merely inclosed it in the same envelope and addressed that to Mrs. Lavender in London.

A day or two afterwards Mr. MacDonald, the minister, came over to Ardtilleach, and on such occasions he invariably went first to the house of Angus M'Eachran. Angus had never complained to him; but the minister had got to imagine that there was something wrong; and occasionally he was rather disturbed about it, for he held himself as partly responsible for the marriage of these young people. This time he found Moira alone.

"And are you ferry well, Moira?" said he, looking at her keenly.

He could see that the girl had recently been crying.

"Oh, ay, Mr. MacDonald; and are you ferry well too? And it iss a fine tay you hef got to come ofer to Ardtilleach."

"And iss Angus gone out to the fishing?"

"I do not know that," she said.

"You do not know that?" said the minister. "Well, well, the tays are ferry much altered now; for in the former tays a young wife would go outside the house, or go down to the rocks, to say good-bye to her husband when he wass going out to the fishing; but you are ferry much in the house, Moira."

"And that iss true, Mr. MacDonald," she answered; "and why should I not be ferry much in the house? Iss it a goot thing for me to go out into the fillage, and my father he will go by without a word to me, and all the neighbours will see it? Yes, I am ferry much in the house, Mr. MacDonald."

"Well," said he, "it iss not a goot thing that you tell me; but you wass always saying, Moira, that you would be petter away from the coorse tongue of your father; and now that you are away, iss it any use being ferry sorry for that, and you a young lass that ought to be ferry prout of a young husband, and one that iss as cleffer with his fingers ass Angus M'Eachran? No, no, Moira, you hef no right to mek such complaints."

"I do not complain at all, Mr. MacDonald," the girl answered. "No, it iss no use in complaining, none at all."

The minister regarded her for a second or two;

he did not quite know how far he would be justified in interfering.

"Well, I am going on to the school-house, Moira," said he, "to see Alister Lewis apout his frients the MacIntyres, who will be thinking of going away to America; and when I come back to Ardtilleach again, Moira, I will come in and say good-bye to you."

So he went on his way. But he had not got a quarter of a mile away from the village when, to his great surprise, he saw Angus M'Eachran sitting out on the rocks over the sea, in the company of old Donald Neil, and both of them making very merry indeed, as he heard from their laughing. The minister crossed over to them. They were seated on the dry turf of the rocks; and there was a black bottle and a single glass between them.

"And are you ferry well, Angus?" said the minister. "And you, Donald Neil? And it wass no thought of seeing you, Angus, that I had this tay. You are not at the fishing?"

"No," said the young man, with some embarrassment. "A man cannot always be going to the fishing."

"I do not think," said the minister, "no, I do not think, Angus M'Eachran, there iss any young man but yourself in the whole of Ardtilleach

this tay—except the young men in the curing-houses."

"Well, well!" said Angus shortly; "iss there any one of the young men hass been so often to the fishing ass I hef been, and where iss the one that hass ass much money in the bank at Styornoway?"

"Ay, ay," said the minister, "that iss a goot thing, and a fery goot thing, mirover; and you will find the goot of the money when you will pegin to puild the cottage with the slate roof. But the money will not get any the bigger, Angus M'Eachran, if you will stay at home on the fine tays for the fishing, ay, and if you will sit out on the rocks trinking whisky in the middle of the tay!"

The minister had grown a trifle vehement.

"There iss no harm in a glass," said Angus M'Eachran gloomily.

"There iss no harm in a glass!" retorted Mr. MacDonald with impatience. "There iss no harm in a glass—ay, I know there iss no great harm in a glass if you will meet with a frient, and when the work iss tone, and then there iss no harm in a glass. But there iss a harm, and a ferry great harm, in it, Angus M'Eachran, if a young man will gif up his work, and tek to trinking in the middle of the tay—and not a glass, no, but a bottle—and it

iss too much whisky you hef trank this tay, Angus M'Eachran."

The young man made no protestation, no excuse. He sate moodily contemplating the rocks before him. His companion, the father of the young man who had taken Angus's place in the boat, was uncomfortably conscious of guilt, and remained silent.

"I do not know," Angus said at length, "I do not know, Mr. MacDonald, that I will go any more to the fishing."

"Hey!" cried the minister, "and iss it a madman you are, Angus M'Eachran? And what will you do, then, that you will go no more to the fishing?"

"It iss the son of Tonald Neil, here, who will pay me for my share in the poat, and he iss a ferry goot fisherman, and the other men will be ferry glat to hef him in the poat."

"Ay, and you?" said the minister, "what iss it you will do yourself, Angus M'Eachran?"

"I do not know," he said gloomily. "It iss not anything I hef the heart to do, unless it will be to go away to Glassgow; there iss not anything else I hef the heart to do."

"To Glassgow!" cried the minister, in angry excitement; "you, Angus M'Eachran! Ay, it iss

once before I will stop you from going to Glassgow!"

"And that was ferry well done!" said the young fisherman, with a bitter laugh, "and there wass much goot came of it, that we did not go away to Glassgow. Well, Mr. MacDonald, I will say nothing against you for that. It iss no fault to you that Moira and me—well, it iss not any use the speaking of it."

The minister turned to the old man.

"Tonald Neil, get up on your feet, and go away ofer to the road there. It iss a few words I hef to say to Angus M'Eachran."

The old man rose with some difficulty, and hobbled away over the rocks. No sooner had he gone than the minister, with an angry look in his face, caught up the black bottle, dashed it down on the rocks below, where the remaining whisky spurted about in all directions.

"The teffle—and tam him!—tek effery drop of the whisky you will trink in the tays when you should be at the fishing, Angus M'Eachran, and you with a young wife—"

"A young wife!" cried the fisherman bitterly (paying no attention to the destruction of the whisky); "it iss no young wife I hef, Mr. MacDonald. It iss a young lass I hef marriet—yes, that iss true enough whateffer—but it iss a young

lass that hass no thought for her husband, and hass no laugh or a joke at any time, and that sits by herself all the day, with her crying and her tiscontent, and will say no word when you reason with her; and iss that a young wife? No, py Kott, Mr. MacDonald, that iss no young wife—and why should I go to the fishing?"

"Ay, ay, Angus M'Eachran," said the minister, "this iss a ferry pad story you hef told me this day, and it wass no thought of this I had when you were married ofer at the manse, and when Mrs. Laffenter will come back in the evening, and when she was ferry sorry that John Fergus wass an angry man, I will be saying to her 'Mrs. Laffenter, it wass effery one knew that pefore; and it wass no shame to you, and no fault to you, that he wass still a foolish man. And Moira Fergus, she will be petter, ay, and ferry much petter, to go and lif with Angus M'Eachran than with John Fergus, and it iss a ferry goot thing you hef done this tay, and it iss ferry kind of you to come all the way from Borva.'"

"Ay, ay," said Angus, "that wass well said, Mr. MacDonald; for who could hef told that this would come out of it?"

"But you must hef patience with the lass, Angus," the minister said, "and you will say a word to her—"

"I will say a word to her!" exclaimed Angus, with a flash of fire in his eyes. "Iss it one word, or fife huntret tousant words I hef said to her? No, I will say no more words to her—there hass been too much of that mirover. It iss to Glassgow I am going, and then she will go back to her father—and tam him!"

"Then you will be a wicket man, Angus M'Eachran!" exclaimed the minister, "ay, a foolish and a wicket man, to think of such things! And what will you do in Glassgow?"

"I do not know."

"No, you do not know! You will take to the whisky, that iss what you will do in Glassgow. Angus M'Eachran, I tell you to put that out of your head; and when I come back from the school-house, ay, I will go and see Moira, and I will say a word to her, but not any word of your going to Glassgow, which iss a foolish thing for a young man to think of."

He did as he had promised; and on the second time of his entering Angus M'Eachran's house he again found Moira alone, though she was now engaged in some domestic work.

"Well, well," he said to her, "it iss a goot thing for a young wife to be tiligent, and look after the house; but there iss more ass that that iss wanted

of a young wife — and I hef just seen Angus M'Eachran, Moira."

"Ay," said the girl rather indifferently; "and hass he not gone out to the fishing?"

"No, he hass not gone out to the fishing; and this iss what I hef to say to you, Moira, that unless you take care, ay, and ferry great care, ay, he will go out to the fishing not any more."

She looked up quickly, and in fear.

"Is Angus ill?"

"Ill! Ay, he is ill; but it iss not in his pody that he iss ill. He iss a fine, strong young man, and there iss many a young lass would hef been glad to hef Angus M'Eachran for her husband; and now that he iss marriet, it wass you, Moira, that should be a good wife to him. And do you know why he is not at the fishing? It iss bekass he hass no heart to go to the fishing. And why should a young man hef no care for his work and his house?—unless this, Moira, that the house is not agreaple to him."

The girl sighed.

"I know that, Mr. MacDonald," she said. "It iss many's the time Angus will say that to me."

"And in Kott's name then, Moira," said the minister indignantly, "why will you not mek the house lighter for him? Iss it nothing to you that your husband will hef a dull house, ay, and a house

that will trife him into idleness such as no young man in Ardtilleach would speak of? Iss it nothing to you, Moira?"

The girl turned to him, with her eyes full of tears.

"Iss it nothing to me, Mr. MacDonald? Ay, it iss a great teal to me. And it iss many the time I will say to myself that I will heed no more the quarrel with my father, and that if he will go by in the fillage without a look or a word, that will be nothing to me. But it iss ferry easy, Mr. MacDonald, to say such things to yourself; and it iss not so ferry easy for a young lass to hef a quarrel with her father, and that all the neighpours will see there iss a quarrel, and not a look or a word between them not any more ass if they wass stranchers to each other. Ay, ay, that iss no light thing for a young lass—"

"Well, I hef no patience with you, Moira," said the minister. "Wass not all this pefore you when you wass getting marriet?"

"Ay," said the girl, with another sigh, "that iss a true word. But there are many things that you will expect, and you will not know what they are until they hef come to you, Mr. MacDonald—and—and—"

"Well, well, well!" said the minister, rather testily, "now that it hass come to you, Moira, what

iss the use of fretting, and fretting, and fretting—"

"There iss not any use in it, Mr. MacDonald," she said simply. "But it iss not effery one will be aple to put such things out of the mind—no, that iss not easy to do."

He stood about for a minute or two, impatient, angry, and conscious that all his reasoning and arguments were of no avail.

"I will go ofer to the curing-house," said he, "and hef a word with your father."

"Mr. MacDonald, you will hef the trouble for nothing. What will you do when Miss Sheila Mackenzie will not be aple to do anything? And it iss many a one in the fillage hass gone to my father—and it is always the same—he will hear no word of me; and if they hef peen anxious and ferry anxious then he will get ferry angry, and they hef come away more afrait of him than effer. No, that iss no use, Mr. MacDonald, the going to my father at the curing-house."

"Then it iss a last word I hef to say to you, Moira," said the minister in an altered tone, as he stepped forward and took her hand. "You are a good lass, and you are not willing to do harm to any one. It iss a great harm you are doing to Angus M'Eachran—ay, indeed, Moira, you hef goot cause

to wonder—but that iss true, and it is a great harm you are doing to yourself. For if there iss no lightness in the house, a young man will not stay in the house, and if his wife iss always fretting and hass no laugh for him when he comes home, he will hef it in his heart not to come to the house at all, and that iss ferry pad for a young man. And you must try, Moira, to get rid of your fretting; or you will be ferry sorry one tay that you tit not get rid of your fretting. Now, good-bye, Moira; and mind what I hef said to you this tay."

So the minister left, not in a very hopeful or happy mood. As he passed the house of John Fergus, he frowned; and then he remembered that he had not checked Angus M'Eachran for using a certain phrase about John Fergus.

"Well, well," thought Mr. MacDonald, "it is no great matter; and if I was Angus M'Eachran perhaps it is the same words I would be for using whether the minister was there or no."

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE DEEPS.

Things went from bad to worse, and that rapidly. Moira knew but little of what was going on, for the neighbours were slow to tell her. But every one in Ardtilleach was aware that Angus M'Eachran had sold his share in the boat to young Donald Neil; and that, while this ready money lasted, he had done no work at all, but merely lounged about until he could get hold of one or two companions to go off on a drinking frolic. Moira saw him go out each day; she did not know but that he was gone to the fishing. When he returned late at night, she sometimes saw that he had been having a glass, and she was a little perturbed. But Angus had a strong head; and he managed to conceal from her for a long time the fashion in which he was spending his life.

He did not deliberately set to work to drink him-

self and his young wife out of house and home. He had fits of remorse, and always was about to turn over a new leaf—next day; but the next came, and Moira was silent and sad, and then he would go out to get a cheerful word with some companions, and a glass. Moreover, the savings of a fisherman either increase or decrease; they never stand still. When the motive was taken away for the steady addition to the little hoard in the bank at Stornoway, that fund itself was in danger. And at length it became known in Ardtilleach that Angus M'Eachran had squandered that also, and that now, if he wanted money, he must go into debt with one of the curers, and hire himself out for one of the curers' boats.

The appearance of the man altered too. He had been rather a smart young fellow, careful of his clothes, and cleanly in his habits; now, as Moira noticed, he paid less attention to these things, and heeded her not when she remonstrated.

One night Angus M'Eachran came home, and staggered into the cottage. Moira regarded him with affright. He sate down on a wooden stool by the peat fire.

"Now there iss an end of it," said he gloomily.

"An end of what, Angus?" said she, in great alarm.

"An end of you, and of me, and of Ardtilleach;

and it iss not in Ardtilleach I can lif any more, but it iss to Glassgow that I am going."

"To Glassgow!" she cried.

"Ay," said he, "this iss no longer any place for me. I hef no share in the poat. I hef no money in the pank. It iss all gone away—in the tammed whisky—and it is not a farthing of money I can get from any one—and what iss to become of you, Moira?"

She did not cry aloud, nor were her eyes wet with tears, but she sate with a white face, trying to comprehend the ruin that had befallen them.

"It iss not the truth you are speaking, Angus M'Eachran!" she said somewhat wildly.

"It iss the truth ass if it were spoken pefore Kott," said he, "and now you will hef something more to cry ofer. Well, I am sorry for you, Moira. It wass another thing I looked for when we were marriet; but now it iss no use my living in Ardtilleach, and it iss to Glassgow I am going."

Moira was rocking herself on the chair, and sobbing and moaning in her great grief. It was true, then. They were ruined; and to whom could she turn for protection? The friends who had come to her wedding were now away in London. As for her father, she might as well have thought of appealing to the rocks on the shore.

"Angus, Angus!" she cried, "you will stay in Ardtilleach! You will not go to Glassgow! It iss many another poat that will be glad to hef you, and there is no one can mek so much at the fishing ass you—"

"And what is the goot of it," he said, "that a man will mek money, and hef to lif a hard life to mek money, and when he comes home, then it iss not like coming home to him at all? What I hef done that wass bad enough; what you have done, Moira Fergus, well it iss something of this that you hef done."

She dared not answer—some strange consciousness oppressed her. She went away from him, and sate in a corner, and cried bitterly. He spoke no more to her that night.

Next morning he was in a very different humour; he was discontented, quarrelsome, and for the first time of their married life spoke rudely and tauntingly to her. The knowledge that he was now a beggar—that the neighbours regarded him as an outcast—that his old companions in the boat were away at their work, leaving him a despicable idler to consort with the old men about—seemed to drive him to desperation. Hitherto he had always said, in answer to friendly remonstrances, that there were more fish in the sea than ever came out of it; and that by and

by he would set to work again. Now it seemed to have occurred to him that his former companions were rather shy of him; and that he had a bad name throughout the island.

"Yes," said he, angrily, to her, "when I go to Glassgow, then you can go to your father, and you can ask him to tek you back to his house. It wass my house that wass not goot enough for you; and from the morning to the night it wass neffer a smile or a laugh wass on your face; and now when I will go away to Glassgow, you will be a great deal petter, ay, and ferry much petter, in the house of your father John Fergus—and tam him!"

She said not a word in reply, for her heart was full; but she put a shawl round her shoulders and walked away over to the curing-house, where her father was. Angus M'Eachran was mad with rage. Was she already taking him at his word; and seeking to return to her father's house? With a wild feeling of vengeance at his heart, he determined there and then to leave the place; and as he set out from Ardtilleach, without a word of good-bye to any one in it, the last thing that he saw was John Fergus coming out to the door of the curing-house to speak to Moira. With many an angry and silent imprecation, he strode along the rough road, and then he began to bethink himself how a penniless

man was to make his way to distant Stornoway and to Glasgow.

The purpose of Moira Fergus was quite different from that which her husband had imagined.

"What will you want with me?" said her father, coldly, when he came out in response to her message. "I hef told you, Moira Fergus, that it iss no word I hef for you. You hef gone to another house; you will stay there—ay, if you wass to lif in Ardtilleach for sixty years."

"It iss Angus M'Eachran," she said, with tears in her eyes, "and—and—he iss going away to Glassgow if he cannot go to the fishing—and—if you would speak a word to Mr. Maclean—"

"Ay, he iss going to Glassgow?" said John Fergus, with an angry flash in his eyes. "And the teffle only knows that he iss fit for nothing but the going to Glassgow. Ay, ay, Moira Fergus, and it wass a prout tay for you, the tay you were marriet to Angus M'Eachran; but it iss not a prout tay any more, that you are married to a man that iss a peggar and a trunkard, and hass not a penny in ta whole world; no, it iss not any longer a prout tay for you that you marriet Angus M'Eachran!"

She would take no heed of these hard words; her purpose to save her husband was too earnest.

"Ay, ay, that wass a bad day," Moira said sadly,

"and if I had known, I would not hef married Angus M'Eachran; but now, father, it would be ferry kind of you to speak a word to Mr. Maclean—"

"For Angus M'Eachran?" said the father, with a savage scowl; "not if he wass to be tammed the morn's mornin'!"

Moira shuddered—her last hope was slowly leaving her.

"You would not hef the neighbours," she pleaded, "you would not hef the neighbours say you wass a hard man, father, and it iss not any one could say a word like yourself to Mr. Maclean; and Mr. Maclean will know that Angus M'Eachran is a ferry goot fisherman and ferry cleffer with his hands, and if he would gif Angus a share in a poat, it would be ferry soon he would be paid back for that, for there iss not any one in the island can make parrels like him—"

"And it iss a foolish lass you are!" the father broke in impatiently, "that you will come to me to speak to Mr. Maclean for Angus M'Eachran. Iss it any cause I hef to speak for Angus M'Eachran? And ferry much I would hef to say for him, when the whole of Ardtilleach, and the whole of the islands will know of his trinking, and his trinking, and not any work, no more ass if he wass an old

man or a rich man, and the money going from him until it iss not a penny of it that iss left!"

"But—"

"And there iss more, Moira Fergus," continued her father vehemently. "I will say to you many's the time I hef no word for you—"

"But only this once—"

"Only this teffle! I tell you to go away, Moira Fergus, and not to come pothering me with your Mr. Macleans and your Angus M'Eachrans! Let him go to the men that hass been trinking his whisky! Let him go to the man who hass his share in the poat. But not to me!"

"Father—"

"I hef told you, Moira Fergus," John Fergus said, recovering from his rage, "that it iss no word will pass petween us; and this iss an end of it."

With that he turned and went into the curing-house, slamming the door after him.

"And it iss a hard man you are," said Moira sadly.

She walked back to her own little cottage, almost fearing that her husband might be inside. He was not; so she entered, and sat down to contemplate the miserable future that lay before her, and to consider what she could do to induce Angus

M'Eachran to remain in Ardtilleach, and take to the fishing and sober ways again.

First of all, she thought of writing to her friends in London; but Angus had the address, and she dared not ask him for it. Then she thought of making a pilgrimage all the way to Borva to beg of the great Mr. Mackenzie there to bring his influence to bear on her husband and on Mr. Maclean the curer, so that some arrangement might be made between them. But how could she, all by herself, make her way to Borva? And where might Angus M'Eachran be by the time she came back?

Meanwhile Angus was not about the village, nor yet out on the rocks, nor yet down in the little harbour; so, with a sad heart enough, she prepared her frugal mid-day meal, and sate down to that by herself. She had no great desire for food, for she was crying most of the time.

Late that evening a neighbour came in, who said she had just returned from Harrabost.

"Ay, Moira," said she, "and what iss wrong now, that Angus M'Eachran will be for going away from Ardtilleach?"

Moira stared at her.

"I do not know what you mean, Mrs. Cameron," she said.

"You do not know, then? You hef not heard the

news, that Angus M'Eachran will be away to Glassgow?"

Moira started up with a quick cry. Her first thought was to rush out of the house to overtake him and turn him back; but how was that possible?

"Oh, Mrs. Cameron, what iss it you tell me this tay! And where tit you see Angus? And are you quite sure?"

"Well, well, Moira," said the old woman, "it iss not any great matter the going to Glassgow; and if you will sit down now, I will tell you."

The girl sate down, silently, and crossed her hands on her lap. There was no more crying now; the last blow had fallen, and despair had supervened.

"You know, Moira, my son that lifs round at the pack of Harrabost, and I was ofer to see him, and all wass ferry well, and his wife hass got ferry well through her trouple. And when I wass for coming away, it wass Angus M'Eachran will come running up to the house, and ferry wild he wass in the look of him. 'Duncan Cameron,' says he, 'will you gif me your poat for two minutes or for three minutes, for I am told that this is the M'Alister's poat that iss coming along, and they are going to Taransay.' You know the M'Alister's poat, Moira, that they pought at Styornoway?"

Moira nodded assent.

"Well, you know, Moira, that Duncan was always a good frient to Angus M'Eachran; and he said, 'Yes, Angus M'Eachran, you may hef the poat, and she is down at the shore, and you can run her out yourself, for the oars and the thole-pins are in her.' But Angus M'Eachran, he says 'Duncan, you will come with me to pring pack the poat, for I will ask the M'Alisters to tek me with them to Taransay; for it iss to Taransay I am going.'"

"Ay, to Taransay!" said Moira eagerly. "And it wass only to Taransay?"

"I will tell you that, Moira," the old woman continued, who would narrate her story in her own way. "Well, well, I went to him, and I said, 'What iss it that takes you to Taransay, Angus M'Eachran, and when will you be coming pack from Taransay?' 'Mrs Cameron,' says he, 'I do not know when I will be coming pack from Taransay, for it iss to Glasgow I am going; and it iss perhaps that I will neffer see Ardtilleach any more.'"

"No, no, no," the girl moaned; "he did not say that, Mrs. Cameron!"

"And I said to him, 'It iss a foolish man you are, Angus M'Eachran, to speak such things, and you with a young wife in Ardtilleach.' 'Ay,' said he, 'Mrs. Cameron, and if there wass no young wife, it

iss perhaps that I would be in Ardtilleach now, and hef my money, and the share in the poat; but it iss a pad tay the tay that a young man marries a lass that is tiscontented and hass no heart in the house, and that iss it that I am going away from Ardtilleach; and Moira—well, Moira hass her father in Ardtilleach.' Ay, that iss what he said to me, Moira, ass Duncan and him they were putting out the poat from the shore."

"My father!" the girl murmured, "I hef not any father now—no, and not any husband—it iss the two that I hef lost. Ay, and Angus M'Eachran hass gone away to Glassgow."

There was no bitter wailing and lamentation; only the hands in her lap were more tightly clenched. The red peats flickered up in the dusk; and her face seemed drawn and haggard.

"Ay, and they pulled out to the M'Alister's poat when she came by, and I wass looking at them all the time from the shore, and Angus M'Eachran, when the M'Alisters put their poat apout, he got apoard of her, and there wass not much talking petween them. And Duncan, I could hear him cry out, 'Good-pye to you this tay, Angus M'Eachran!' And Angus he cried out, 'Goot-pye to you, Duncan Cameron.' And when Duncan he came back to the shore, he will tell me that the M'Alisters were going

down to the ferry pig poat that iss at Taransay, and that hass come round from Lochnamaddy, and Angus M'Eachran he wass saying he would know some of the sailors in her, and the captain would tek him to Glassgow if he worked the passage. Ay, ay, Moira, I can see it iss not the good news I hef prought to you this night; and it is a pad thing for a young lass when her husband goes away to Glassgow; but you do not know yet that he will stay in Glassgow, and you will write a line to him, Moira—"

"How can I write a line to him, Mrs. Cameron?" the girl said; "there iss more people in Glassgow ass there iss in Styornoway, and the Lewis, and Harris all put together; and how will they know which of them iss Angus M'Eachran?"

"Then you will send the letter to Styornoway, and you will gif it to the captain of the great poat, the 'Clansman;' and iss there any one in Glassgow that he will not know?"

"A letter," Moira said wistfully. "There iss no letter that will bring Angus M'Eachran pack, not now that he hass gone away from Ardtilleach. And I will say good-night to you now, Mrs. Cameron. It iss a little tired I am."

"You are not ferry well the night, Moira," said the old woman, looking at her, "I do not know that I will leaf you by yourself the night."

"But I will ferry much rather be by myself, Mrs. Cameron—ay, ay, I hef many things to think ofer; and it iss in the morning I will come to see you, Mrs. Cameron, for I am thinking of going to Glassgow."

"Ay, you will come to me in the morning, like a good lass," said Mrs. Cameron, "and then you will think no more of going to Glassgow, which would be a foolish thing for a young lass, and it iss not yet, no, nor to-morrow, nor any time we will let you do such a foolish thing, and go away from Ardtilleach."

CHAPTER X.

A PROCLAMATION.

Moira did not go to Glasgow; she remained by herself in Ardtilleach, in the small cottage all by herself, whither one or two of the neighbours, having a great pity for her condition, came to her, and occasionally brought her a little present of tea or sugar. How she managed to live at all, no one knew; but she was very proud, and maintained to those who visited her that she was well off and content. She was very clever with her needle, and in this way requited her friends for any little kindness they showed her.

So the days and the weeks went by, and nothing was heard of Angus M'Eachran. Mr. MacDonald made inquiries of the men who had gone with him to Taransay; and they said he had undertaken to work his passage to Glasgow in a boat that was going round the island for salt-fish. That was all they knew.

Well, Mr. MacDonald was not a rich man, and he had a small house; but his heart was touched by the mute misery of this poor lass who was living in the cottage all by herself, as one widowed, or an outcast from her neighbours. So he went to her and asked her to come over to the manse and stay there until something should be heard of her husband.

"It is a ferry goot man you are, Mr. MacDonald," she said, "and a ferry kind man you hef been, always and now too, to me; but I cannot go with you to the manse."

"Kott pless me!" he cried impatiently. "How can you lif all by yourself? It iss not goot for a young lass to lif all by herself."

"Ay, ay, Mr. MacDonald, and sometimes it is ferry goot; for she will begin to go back ofer what hass passed, and she will know where she wass wrong, and if there iss punishment for that, she will take the punishment to herself."

"And where should the punishment be coming," said he warmly, "if not to the young man who would go away to Glassgow and leaf a young wife without money, without anything, after he has trank all the money?"

"You do not know—you do not know, Mr. MacDonald," she said sadly, and shaking her head.

Then she added, almost wildly, "Ay, Mr. MacDonald, and you hef no word against the young wife that will trife her husband into the trinking, and trife him away from his own house and the place he was porn, and all his frients, and the poat that he had, and will trife him away to Glassgow—and you hef no word against that, Mr. MacDonald?"

"Well, it iss all ofer, Moira," said he gently. "And what iss the use now of your lifing here by yourself; and when your peats are finished, who will go out and cut the peats for you?"

"I can cut the peats for myself, Mr. MacDonald," said she simply; "and it iss one or two of the neighbours they will cut some peats for me, for on the warm tays it iss little I hef to do, and I can go out and turn their peats for them."

"You will be better ofer at the manse, Moira."

"It iss ferry kind you are, Mr. MacDonald; but I will not go ofer to the manse."

In his dire perplexity Mr. MacDonald went away back to the manse; and spent a portion of the evening in writing a long and beautifully-worded letter to Mrs. Lavender, the young married lady who had been present at Moira's wedding, and who was now in London. If Mr. MacDonald's spoken English was peculiar in pronunciation, his written English was accurate enough; and to add a grace

to it, and show that he was not merely an undisciplined islander, he introduced into it a scrap or two of Latin. He treated the story of Moira and her husband from a high literary point of view. He invited the attention of the great lady in London to this incident in the humble annals of the poor. She would doubtless remember, amid the gaieties of the world of fashion, and in the thousand distractions of the vast metropolis, the simple ceremony of which she had been a spectator in the distant islands, which, if they were not the *nitentes Cycladas* of the Roman bard—and so forth. Mr. MacDonald was proud of this composition. He sealed it up with great care, and addressed it to "The Hon. Mrs. Lavender" at her house in London.

An answer came with surprising swiftness. Mr. MacDonald was besought to convoy Moira forthwith to the island of Borva, where the wife of Mr. Mackenzie's keeper would give her something to do about Mrs. Lavender's house. Mr. and Mrs. Lavender would be back in the Hebrides in about three weeks. If the rains had been heavy, Moira was to keep fires in all the rooms of the house, especially the bed-rooms, incessantly. And Mrs. Lavender charged Mr. MacDonald with the fulfilment of these her commands. He was in no wise to fail to have Moira M'Eachran removed from

her solitary cottage to the spacious house at Borva.

The minister was a proud man the day he went over to Ardtilleach with this warrant in his hand. Would Moira withstand him now? Indeed the girl yielded to all this show of authority; and humbly, and gratefully, and silently she set to work to put together the few things she possessed, so that she might leave the village in which she was born. Indeed, she went away from Ardtilleach with little regret. Her life there had not been happy. She went round to a few of the cottages, to bid good-bye to her neighbours; and when it became known to John Fergus that his daughter was going away to Borva, he instantly departed for Killeena, on some mission or another, and remained there the whole day, so that she should not see him before leaving.

She remained a couple of days at the manse, waiting for a boat; and then, when the chance served, the minister himself went with her to Borva, and took her up to the house of Mr. Mackenzie, who was called the king of that island. After a few friendly words from the great man—who then took Mr. MacDonald away with him, that they might have a talk over the designs of Prussia, the new bridge on the road to the Butt of Lewis, and other matters of great public importance—Moira was

handed over to the keeper's wife, who was housekeeper there. She did not know what she had done to be received with so much friendliness and kindness; she was not aware, indeed, that a letter from London had preceded her arrival.

She slept in Mr. Mackenzie's house, and she had her meals there, but most of the day she spent in the empty house to which Mr. and Mrs. Lavender were shortly coming. What she could do in the way of preparing the place for their reception, she did right willingly. There was never a more devoted servant; and her gratitude towards those who befriended her was on many occasions too much for her English—she had to escape from its constraint into the Gaelic.

Then there was a great stir throughout the island, for every one knew that Mr. and Mrs. Lavender were on their way from London; and the wonderful waggonette—which was in effect a boat placed on wheels, with oars and everything complete—that Mr. Lavender had built for himself, was, one morning, taken down Loch Roag, and landed at Callernish, and driven across to Stornoway. The *Clansman* was coming in that day.

It was in the dusk of the evening that the party from London—there were one or two strangers—arrived in the little bay underneath Mrs. Lavender's

house, and walked up the steep incline, the luggage following on the shoulders of the sailors. And the very first words that Mrs. Lavender uttered on entering the house were—

"Where is Moira Fergus?"

The girl was greatly afraid to find herself in the presence of all these people; and Mrs. Lavender, seeing that, quickly took her aside into a room where they were by themselves. Moira was crying.

"And you have not heard anything more of him, Moira?" she asked.

"No, I hev heard no word at all," the girl said, "and I do not look for that now, not any more. I hef lost effery one now, both my father and my husband, and it iss myself that hass done it; and when I think of it all, I will say to myself that neffer any one wass alife that hass done as I hef done—"

"No, no, no, Moira," her friend said. "It is not so bad as that. Mr. MacDonald wrote to me that you fretted a great deal, and that Angus was very impatient, and he does not know what made him go away to Glasgow, for how could that make it any better? But we will find him for you, Moira."

"You will find him," the girl said sadly; "and what if you will find him? He will neffer come back to Ardtilleach. You do not know all about it, Mrs. Laffenter—no, I am sure Mr. MacDonald is a

ferry kind man, and he would not tell you all about it. And this is why Angus M'Eachran will go away to Glassgow—that he had trank all the money there wass in the bank at Styornoway, and he had no more a share in the poat, and he wass ashamed to go apout Ardtilleach. And all that wass my doing—indeed it wass—"

"Well, well, you must give up fretting about it, Moira, and we will get Angus back to Ardtilleach, or back to Borva—"

"But you do not know, Mrs. Laffenter," the girl said, in an excited and despairing way; "you do not know the harm that wass done to Angus M'Eachran! And will he effer get back from that —from the trinking, and the trinking, and I myself with ferry little thought of it at Ardtilleach? And where iss he now? And what iss he doing? It wass no more care for his life that he had when he went away from Ardtilleach!"

"Well, well, Moira," said her friend soothingly, "if you were to blame for part of it all, you have suffered a great deal; and so has he, for it is not a happy thing for a man to go away from a young wife, and go away among strangers, without any friend, or occupation, or money. You seem to have got into a bad plight at Ardtilleach—perhaps it was better to have it broken up like that. It was

certainly a great pity that you did not discover all you know now before things came to their worst; but if they are at their worst, they must mend, you know. So you must not give up hope just yet."

Moira suddenly recollected herself.

"I am keeping you from your frients, Mrs. Laffenter," said she; "and it iss ferry kind of you, but I do not wish that you will be troupled apout me and Angus M'Eachran. And I hef not thanked you for sending me here; and I do not know how to do that; but it iss not bekass I hef no feeling apout it that I cannot thank you, Mrs. Laffenter."

She was a servant in the house; she would not shake hands with Mrs. Lavender. But her mistress took her hand, and said, with a great kindness in her face,—

"I will say good night to you now, Moira, for I may not see you again to-night. And to-morrow morning, you will come to me, and I will tell you what can be done about Angus M'Eachran."

That evening, after dinner, Mrs. Lavender told the story to her guests from London; and she was obviously greatly distressed about it; but her husband said,—

"The young fellow had no money; he is bound to be in Glasgow. We can easily get at him by advertising in the papers; and if you can persuade

him to come to Borva, we shall have plenty of work for him, for he is a clever carpenter. But if he has enlisted—"

"I propose," said one of the guests, a young American lady, recently married, "I propose that, if he has enlisted, we who are here now subscribe to buy him out."

Her husband, a less impulsive and more practical person, got a piece of paper, and wrote these words on it:—

Should this meet the eye of Angus M'Eachran, of Ardtilleach, in the island of Darroch, he will hear of something to his advantage by communicating at once with Mrs. Lavender, Sea-view, island of Borva, Hebrides.

CHAPTER XI.

A PROPHET IN THE WILDERNESS.

It would have been strange indeed, if Angus M'Eachran had missed seeing this advertisement, for it was in all the Glasgow newspapers, morning after morning. It happened that, late one night, he was in a miserable little public-house near the Broomielaw, with two or three companions. He was now a very different man from the smart young fisherman who had lived at Ardtilleach. The ravages of drink were everywhere visible, in his face, in his shabby dress, in his trembling hand. He was at the moment sullen and silent, though his companions, who were Highlanders employed about the harbour, were talking excitedly enough, in their native tongue.

M'Eachran had also got occasional work about the ships; but he stuck to it only until he had earned a few shillings, and then he went off on a

fresh drinking-bout. There were always plenty of "loafers" about to join him; he became a familiar figure in all the small public-houses about; and in garrulous moments he had told his companions something of his history, so that both himself and the circumstances of his leaving his native place were widely known.

On this evening the landlord of the public-house came into the den in which the Highlandmen were drinking, and said, pointing to a portion of the newspaper he held in his hands,—

"Is this no you, M'Eachran!"

Angus M'Eachran took the newspaper, and read the lines pointed out.

"Ay, it iss me," he said gloomily.

"Man, there's something there for ye!" the publican said. "Canna ye read it? They've gotten some money for ye, as sure as ye're a leevin sinner!"

"It iss no money they hef for me," said M'Eachran; "it is these ferry grand people, and they will want me to go pack to Ardtilleach. No, I hef had enough, and plenty, and more as that of Ardtilleach. The teffle will tek the tay that I go pack to Ardtilleach!"

"Ye're a fulish cratur, man. Do ye think they wud gang to the awfu' expense o' advertisin' in the

newspapers if there wasna something gran' waitin' for ye?"

"Go and tam you, John Jameson, and go and pring me another mutchkin of your pad whisky, that iss not fit to be put before swines."

The landlord did not care to quarrel with a good customer. He went off to get the whisky, merely saying, in an under-tone,—

"They Hielanmen, they've nae mair manners than a stot; but they're the deevils to swallow whisky."

He took no notice of the advertisement; he did not even care to speculate on what it might mean. Had Angus M'Eachran parted from his wife merely through some fierce quarrel, and had he resolved to go to Glasgow merely as a measure of revenge, the prospect of a reconciliation might have been welcome. But it was not so. He had left Ardtilleach simply out of sheer despair. He had drunk all his money; he had disgraced himself in the eyes of his neighbours; he had long ago abandoned any notion of having any real companionship with his wife. Besides, by this time he had acquired the drunkard's craving; and in Glasgow, provided he could get any sort of work, he would be able to do as he pleased with his money. When he got to Glasgow, he abandoned himself to drinking without any remorse. His chances in life were gone; there remained but this.

He had no boat, no home, no relatives; his society was in the public-house; the one enjoyable experience of the day was the sensation of beatific stupor rising into his head after drinking repeated doses of whisky. If he was ill and surly next morning, there was but little sense of shame mingled with his moods. Nor did he consider himself a very ill-used person, whose wrongs ought to excite compassion. He simply was what he was, as the natural result of what had gone before; and he looked neither to the past nor to the future. It was enough if he had the wherewithal in his pocket to pay for another dram; and he did not care to ask whether, in the bygone time, he was the injuring or the injured party.

But it became more difficult for him to get those odd jobs about the quays, for his unsteady habits were notorious, and no one could depend on his remaining sober for a single day. He became shabbier and shabbier in appearance; and now the winter was coming on, and many a day he shivered with the cold as he walked aimlessly about the streets. When he could get no work, and when he had no money with which to go into a public-house, he would often wander idly along the inner thoroughfares of the town, perhaps with some vague hope of meeting an acquaintance who would give him a glass. He was not afraid of meeting any of his old friends from

Ardtilleach; they could not have recognized him.

One night he was going up Candleriggs Street in this aimless fashion, and a bitterly cold night it was. A north-east wind was blowing down the thoroughfares, driving a stinging sleet before it; even the hardiest were glad to escape indoors from such weather. Angus M'Eachran was not proof against cold and wet as he had been in former days. He shivered like a reed in the wind; his limbs were chilled; if he had not been in the semi-bemused state of the confirmed drunkard he would have crept back to his miserable lodging. As it was, his only thought at the moment was to get a little shelter from the bitter wind.

He came to the entrance into the City Hall, and here was an open space, the light of which promised something of warmth. There were a great many people going in; and "Free Admission" stared every one in the face. M'Eachran crept into a corner, glad to be out of the cold for a moment.

The mere going by of people seemed to have a fascination for him. His head was dazed. When a friendly old gentleman in passing said, "Weel, ma man, are ye no comin' in? I dinna think you could do better," he answered vaguely, "Yes," and joined the stream. There was a great crush; he was borne

into the hall. So dense was the crowd that no one seemed to notice his shabby clothes. He got no seat, but he was well propped up; and the heat of the great assembly began to thaw his frozen limbs.

And who was this maniac and mountebank on the platform—this short, stout, ungainly man, with lank yellow hair, prominent front teeth, and exceedingly long arms which he flung about as he stamped up and down and ranted? Truly, he was a ridiculous-looking person; and it was no wonder that highly cultivated people, who read the reviews, and went into mild frenzy over blue and white china, and were agitated about the eastern position, should refuse to go and hear this stump-orator who was lecturing on temperance all over the country. The stories told of his *ad captandum* vulgarity and his irreverence were shocking. Jokes were made about the wild fashion in which he dealt with his *h's*; although, being a Yorkshireman of inferior education, he never added an *h*, he simply ignored the letter altogether, and was profoundly unconscious of doing so. He spoke with a strong north-country accent; he marched up and down the platform, with perspiration on his unlovely face; he sawed the air with his arms, and was by turns angry with a screeching anger and pathetic with a theatrical effusiveness. A person of refined taste could not approve of Mr. Robert J.

Davis and his oratory. The exhibition was altogether too absurd. And yet there are in this country at present thousands of human beings whom this man rescued from ruin; there are thousands of homes which he restored to peace and happiness, after that seemed impossible; there are thousands of women who cannot utter that commonplace name without tears of gratitude. And these people never thought the less of R. J. Davis because he ill-treated the letter *h*.

"Yes, my friends," this uncouth creature was saying, or rather bawling, "you see that miserable drunkard crawling along the street, dirt on his clothes, idiocy in his face, his eyes turned away for shame—and you despise him—and are you not right in despising him? Perhaps you don't know. Well, I'll tell you. That skulking creature, that reptile of the gutter, was once the heir of all the ages; and when he was born he came into a wonderful heritage that had been stored up for him through centuries and centuries. Great statesmen had spent their lives in making laws for him; patriots had shed their blood for him; men of science had made bridges, and railways, and steamships for him; discoverers and great merchants had gone over all the earth, and there was sugar coming from one place, and cotton from another, and tea from another—from all parts of the world these things were coming. And for all this,

and for far more than that, what was expected of him?—only that he should grow up a respectable citizen, and enjoy the freedom and the laws that his forefathers fought for, and do his duty towards God, and the State, and the friends whose anxious care had guided him through all the perils of childhood. What was his gratitude? What has he done?—what but throw shame on the name of the mother who bore him, making himself a curse to society and a disgrace to friends who now avoid him. Has he a wife?—think of her! Has he children?—think of them! Good God, think of the young girl going away from her father's home, and trusting all her life to this new guidance, and looking forward to the years of old age, and the gentle going out of an honourable and peaceful life. And this is the guidance—this is the protection—that she sits up in the night-time, with her eyes red with weeping, and she listens for the drunken stagger of an inhuman ruffian, and she prays that God would in his mercy send some swift disease upon her, and hurry her out of her grief and her shame. That is the return that the drunkard makes for all the love and care that have been lavished on him—and you despise him—yes, he despises himself as he crawls along the pavement—his home broken up and ruined, his wife and children sent shivering to the almshouse—"

There was a sharp, quick cry at this moment; and the lecturer stopped. The people near Angus M'Eachran turned round; and there was the young fisherman, with his eyes fixed and glazed, and his arm uplifted as if appealing to the lecturer.

"The man is mad," said one; "take him out."

But they could not take him out, for the crowd was too dense; but as some one at the door seemed to have fancied that a woman had fainted, a tumbler of water was fetched and quickly handed over. M'Eachran drank some of the water.

"No," said he, seeing they were trying to make way for him; "I am for staying here."

And there he did stay until the end of the lecture, which was not a long one. But that was only part of the evening's proceedings. Winding up with a passionate appeal to the people before him to come forward and sign the abstention pledge—for the sake of their friends, if not of themselves—the lecturer stepped down to a space in front of the platform which had been kept clear, and there opened two large volumes which were placed on a narrow wooden table.

The people began to pour out of the various doorways; those who wished to stay and put down their names were gradually left behind. Among the latter was a young man who kept in the background, and

was about the very last to sign ; when he went up to the table his face was pale, his lips quite firm, his hand tremulous. This was what he wrote :—"Name, *Angus M'Eachran ;* age, 24 ; occupation, *fisherman ;* born, *island of Darroch* ; resides, *Glasgow.*" Mr. R. J. Davis looked at this young man rather curiously —perhaps only guessing, but not quite knowing what he had done that night.

CHAPTER XII.

AFTER MANY DAYS.

It was a terrible struggle. The thirst for drink had a grip of him that was an incessant torture: then there was the crushing difficulty of obtaining work for a man of his appearance. First of all, he left Glasgow and his associates there; and went to Greenock—the fare by the steamboat was only sixpence. He went down to the quays there, and hung about; and at last his Highland tongue won him the favour of the captain of a small vessel that was being repaired in dock. He got M'Eachran some little bit of work to do; and the first thing to which the young man devoted his earnings was the purchase of some second-hand clothes. He was now in a better position to go and ask for work.

If a man can keep sober in Greenock, which is one of the most dingy and rainy towns in this or any other country, he will keep sober anywhere.

Not only did M'Eachran keep sober; but his sobriety, his industry, and his versatility—in Darroch he was famous for being able to turn his hand to anything—were speedily recognized by the foreman, and ended by his securing permanent employment. Then wages were high—such wages as had never been heard of in the Hebrides; and his wants were few. It was a strange thing to see the dogged industry of the Norseman fight with the impatience of the Celt; all day he would patiently and diligently get through his work, and then at night he would fret and vex his heart because he could not accomplish impossibilities. Nevertheless his companions knew that Angus M'Eachran was amassing money; for he earned much and spent little.

Time went by; he heard no news from Darroch or Killeena; and yet he would not write. Not only had he no hope of living again with Moira, but he had no wish for it. The recollection of bygone times was too gloomy. It was for quite another purpose that he was working hard and saving money.

One evening, going home from his work, and almost at the threshold of his own lodgings, he ran against a withered old Highlander named Connill, who was an under-keeper in Harris, and was acquainted with some of the Darroch people.

"Kott pless me, iss it you, Angus M'Eachran?" the old man cried. "Ay, it iss many a tay since I will see you. And now you will come and hef a tram and a word or two together."

"If you will come into the house, Duncan Connill," said Angus, "and we are just at the house, I will gif you a tram; but I hef not touched the whisky myself not for more ass fourteen months I pelief. And are you ferry well, Duncan Connill; and when wass you ofer in Darroch?"

They went into the younger man's lodgings, and in front of the cheerful fire they had a chat together, and M'Eachran told his old acquaintance all that had recently happened to him.

"And now you will go pack to Darroch," said the old Highlandman. "Ay, and it iss ferry prout Moira Fergus will be to see you looking so well, and hafing such good clothes, and more ass two pound fife a week."

"Well, I am not going pack to Darroch, and, yes, I am going pack to Darroch," said Angus; "but it iss not to stay in Darroch that I am going pack. Moira she will be with her father; and I will not tek her away from her father—it wass enough there wass of that pefore; but I will mek the arranchement to gif her some money from one week to the next week, ass a man would gif his

wife, and then I will come pack to Greenock, and she will stay with John Fergus—and tam John Fergus!"

"Ay, ay," said the old Highlandman, "and that iss ferry well said, Angus M'Eachran; and if the lass will stay with her father, in the name of Kott let her stay with her father!—but if I wass you, Angus M'Eachran, it iss not much of the money I would gif a lass that would stay with her father, and her a marriet wife—no, I would not gif her much of the money, Angus."

"Well," said Angus, "it iss more ass fourteen months or eighteen months that I hef giffen her no money at all."

"And I was thinking," said Duncan Connill, "that it wass many the tay since I hef been to Darroch; but when I wass there, it wass said that Moira wass away ofer at Borva, with Mr. Mackenzie's daughter, that was marriet to an Englishman—"

"Ay, ay," said Angus, "she wass a goot frient to Moira and to me; and if she would tek Moira away for a time to Borva, that wass a great kindness too; but you do not think, Duncan Connill, she will always stay at Borva, and her always thinking of John Fergus? But when she hass the money of her own, then she will do what she likes to do, even although she iss in the house of John Fergus."

"And when will you think of coming to Darroch, Angus?"

"I do not know that, Duncan Connill. We are ferry pusy just now, and all the yard working ofertime, and ferry good wages. But it iss not ferry long before I will come to Darroch; and if you would send me a line to tell me of the people there—what you can hear of them in Styornoway—it would be a kind thing to do, Duncan Connill."

And so the old man took back Angus M'Eachran's address to the Hebrides; and began to noise it abroad that Angus was making a great deal of money in Greenock; and that he had a notion of coming some day to Stornoway, and of getting into business there as a builder of boats.

About three weeks after Duncan Connill had seen Angus M'Eachran, a young girl timidly tapped at the door of Angus's lodgings, and asked the landlady if he was inside.

"No, he's no," said the woman sulkily; for landladies who have good lodgers do not like their being called upon by young women. The good lodgers are apt to marry and go away.

"When will he be in?" said the girl.

"I dinna ken."

So she turned away, and went out into the dismal streets of Greenock, over which there gloomed a

grey and smoky twilight. She had not gone far when she suddenly darted forward, and caught a man by the hand, and looked up into his face.

"Angus!"

"Ay, iss it you, Moira Fergus?" said he coldly, and drawing back. "And what hef you come for to Greenock?"

"It wass to see you, Angus M'Eachran—but not that you will speak to me like that," said the girl, beginning to cry.

"And who iss with you?" said he, not moved in the least by her tears.

"There iss no one with me," she said passionately; "and there wass no one with me all the way from Styornoway; and when Duncan Connill will tell me you wass in Greenock, I will say to him 'I am going to see Angus M'Eachran; and I do not know what he will say to me; but I hef something to say to him.' And it is this, Angus, that I wass a bad wife to you, and it iss many's the night I hef cried apout it since you wass away, from the night to the morning; and now that I hef been away from Darroch for more ass a year, it iss not any more to Darroch I would be for going—no, nor to Borva, nor to Styornoway—but where you are, Angus, if you will tek me—and where you will go I will go too—if that iss your wish, Angus M'Eachran."

She stood there, mutely awaiting his decision, and trying to restrain her tears.

"Moira," said he, "come into the house. It iss a great thing you hef told me this tay; and it iss ferry sorry I am that I tit not hear of it pefore. But there iss many a tay that iss yet to come, Moira."

These two went into Angus M'Eachran's lodgings; and the landlady was more civil when something of Moira's story was told her; and the young wife—with trembling hands and tearful eyes, but with a great and silent joy at her heart—sate down to the little tea-table on which Angus's evening meal was laid. That was not a sumptuous banquet; but there was no happier meeting anywhere in the world that night than the meeting of these two simple Highland folks. And here the story of Moira Fergus, and of her marriage with Angus M'Eachran, may fitly end.

THE MAN WHO WAS LIKE SHAKSPEARE.

THE MAN WHO WAS LIKE SHAKSPEARE.

CHAPTER I.

THE DOCTOR DREAMS.

On the 24th of December last year Dr. Maurice Daniel left his home in Brompton, London, for his accustomed after-breakfast stroll. First of all he walked down to Chelsea Bridge, and had a look at the grey river, the grey skies, and the grey shadows of London in the distance. Then he wandered on until he found himself at Victoria Station. Apparently having no business to do there—or any where else for the matter of that—he turned, and proceeded to make the best of his way back to his own house.

Now it happened that he strayed into a somewhat narrow and dingy street, the narrowness and dingi-

ness of which he did not perceive, for his mind was occupied with his familiar hobby, which was phrenology. This hale old gentleman of sixty-five had himself some notion of completing the labours of Gall and Spurzheim, and had already collected some variety of materials in his odd little hermitage at Brompton. He was thinking of all these things in a somewhat absent way, when his attention was suddenly drawn to a small shop in this gloomy thoroughfare through which he was passing. It was a tailor's shop. There were no signs of a large trade in the place; in fact, one could only tell that it was a tailor's shop because the tailor himself was visible through the dirty window, seated on a board, and industriously plying needle and thread. It was the appearance of this man that had startled Dr. Daniel out of his reverie. The tailor bore an extraordinary resemblance to the Droeshout portrait of Shakspeare, insomuch, that the old gentleman outside could only stand and stare at him. There were points of difference, of course. The head was narrower than Shakspeare's, but the forehead was quite as lofty. The hair was red. What the tailor's eyes were he could not see, for they were fixed on his work; but they were probably light blue.

"Comparison and causality enormous," the old Doctor said to himself. "Hope and wonder also

large. Number and time deficient. Language, I fear, not much to speak of. But what a head—what a brain! Fifty-five ounces, I will take my oath—six ounces over the average of the European male. Why, Lord Campbell had only fifty-three; and then the splendid possibilities that lie in the difference! What is Bain's phrase? that 'while the size of brain increases in arithmetical proportion, intellectual range increases in geometrical proportion.' Here is a man with brain-power sufficient to alter the history of a nation."

The old Doctor walked on, dreaming harder than ever. And now there arose in his mind a project, of which the origin was two-fold. The night before he had been reading in his bachelor study a heap of Christmas literature, that had been sent him by his sister, an old maiden lady, who lived mostly at Bath, and who took this means of marking her friendly sentiments toward her brother. She was not a sentimental old lady, but she was correct and methodical in her ways, and believing that Christmas literature was proper at Christmas, she had despatched to her brother a fairly large quantity of it. Having received the gift, he was bound to make use of it; so he sat down after dinner by his study fire and pored over the stories, old and new, that she had sent. He began to feel that he ought to do

something for Christmas. He did not wish to be classed among those persons who, in the stories, were described as sordid, mean, black-hearted, and generally villainous because they were indifferent about Christmas, or unable to weep over it. Moreover, Dr. Daniel was really an amiable old gentleman, and some of the stories of charity touched him. He was determined that nobody should say he was a Mr. Scrooge, if only he had an opportunity of doing anybody a good turn.

Now, as he walked home to Brompton this forenoon, that vague desire of doing some benevolent deed co-operated with his deep-lying interest in phrenology to lead him to a daring resolve. Although not a very wealthy man he was pretty well off, and always had sufficient funds in hand for an exceptional call. He would now, he said, try what could be done with this poor tailor. He would give to that splendid brain its opportunity. Who could tell how many village Hampdens and mute inglorious Miltons had not been lost to this country simply because we had no sufficient system of national education, by which the chance of declaring himself was elsewhere given to any capable youth? There could be little doubt but that the tailor was a victim to this lack of early instruction. In making his acquaintance, in becoming his patron, in placing

before him opportunities of acquiring the power of expression, a good deed would be done to the poor man in any case, while there was also the beautiful and captivating hope that in course of time a great genius would reveal himself to his country, all through the kindly ministrations of a philosopher who should be nameless.

Inspired by this hope to overcome his natural shyness and timidity, Dr. Daniel came out again in the afternoon, and made his way down to the tailor's shop. The man still sat there—more ignoble drudgery could not be imagined. The Doctor entered.

"I did not observe your name over the door?" said he, hesitatingly, to the tailor, who had turned quickly round, and was staring at him with a pair of small, piercing, light blue eyes.

"'Tis Gearge O'Leary, Sor," said the tailor, looking rather afraid.

The Doctor's hopes were slightly dashed: the man was an Irishman. But then, he instantly reflected, Ireland had not yet produced her Shakspeare; perhaps this was he.

"An Irishman, I presume?"

"Yis, Sor," said the tailor, somewhat recovering from his astonishment, and proceeding to get down from the board. "Is there anny thing, now, that—"

"Oh yes," cried the old Doctor, immensely relieved to find a subterfuge suggested to him. "I wanted to see if you would repair some things for me. Dear, dear me, and so you are an Irishman! I am sure I don't know what I wish done to them. Could you call this evening on me, about half-past eight? Oh I don't wish you to work to-morrow—far from it; but I should like to have the things taken away. Could you oblige me, Mr. O'Leary, by calling yourself?"

That evening Mr. O'Leary, wearing an elegant black frock-coat, and a beautiful bright green necktie, was shown into the Doctor's study, where the old gentleman was seated by the fire, with a decanter of port and a couple of wine-glasses on the table.

"Now, Mr. O'Leary," said this cunning old gentleman, with a fine affectation of manner, "I have my ways, you know, and I never do business with any man without having a glass of wine over it. Sit down and help yourself. 'Twas my grandfather left me that; you needn't be afraid of it. And how long have you been a tailor, Mr. O'Leary?"

"Is it how long I have been a tailor, Sor?" said Mr. O'Leary, helping himself to the port, and taking care to have the glass pretty well filled; "why, Sor, since ever I could spake, barrin' the five years I was in the army, until me father bought me out."

"You have been in the army, too? Don't be afraid to try another glass of that port, Mr. O'Leary."

"Well, sure enough, 'tis Christmas-toime, Sor," said Mr. O'Leary, turning to the table right willingly.

Matters having been thus satisfactorily settled, the wily Doctor gradually began to get out of O'Leary all the facts concerning his history which he chose to tell. The Doctor's housekeeper had certainly brought in a number of old and shabby garments, which were flung on a sofa hard by; but the Doctor made no reference to them, while his guest seemed sufficiently pleased to sit in a comfortable arm-chair, with a decanter of port wine at his elbow. Perhaps it was the wine that had made him a trifle garrulous; but at all events he talked about himself and his various experiences of life with a charming frankness. Here was a man, the Doctor said to himself, of infinite observation. Cuvier, with his sixty-four ounces of brain, could only stow away facts about birds, beasts, and fishes; here was a man, with probably nine ounces less, who had stored up invaluable experiences of mankind, their habits, customs, and humorous ways. O'Leary was as much at home among the fishermen of his native village, as among the democratic tailors of London. At one

time he was describing his life in the army, at another telling how he had served as a gamekeeper when trade was bad. The more loosely his tongue wagged, the more daring became his epithets; but the Doctor was aware that Shakspeare himself had not always been cautious in his language. But when O'Leary came to describe his present circumstances, he grew less buoyant. Affairs were not going well with him. He could barely screw the rent of that humble shop out of his earnings. And then, with some shyness, he admitted the existence of a young woman who had a great interest in his welfare, and he said he thought they would never be able to get married if his small business did not improve.

"Ah, you have a sweetheart," said Dr. Daniel slyly. "I dare say, now, Mr. O'Leary, you have written some bits of poetry about her, haven't you?"

"Is it poethry?" said O'Leary, with a loud laugh; "'tis a mighty quare sort o' poethry, Sor, an' no mistake; but, oh yes, Sor, I've sent her many's the bit o' poethry, and 'tis very fond of it she is, Sor."

The old Doctor's face gleamed with delight; step by step the whole affair was marching on well. His fairest hopes were being realized.

"I have a great interest in literary matters, Mr. O'Leary, and I should like to see some of your poetry,

but I fear I could not ask you to show me any of the verses you have sent to your sweetheart. Is there no other subject, now, that you have thought of trying? A man of your quick observation ought to aim at something better than sewing clothes. Do I speak too plainly!"

"Divil a bit," said Mr. O'Leary frankly.

"And, to tell you the truth, I should be glad to do anything in the way of helping you that I could. I don't say give up your trade at once; that is a dangerous step. To attain eminence in literature you require long and careful preparation—a wide experience that is only to be gained by diligent study of men in all walks of life—a freedom of expression only to be acquired by practice. And these things Mr. O'Leary are only the railway lines. The brain is the engine. You have got a good head."

"There's many a stick has been broken by coming against it, Sor," said O'Leary modestly.

"I do not wish to raise false hopes," continued the Doctor, feeling it his duty to express a doubt which he did not himself entertain for a moment; "but this I may say, that I am interested in you, and am willing to help you if I can. You may take these clothes, Mr. O'Leary, and look over them at your convenience. I am in no hurry for them. But if within the next few days you care to write a

few verses, just to give one a notion of the bent of your mind and of your faculty of expression, I should be glad to see them."

"About what, Sor?"

"Anything, anything," said the Doctor. "Obey the free impulse of your own imagination. By the time you see me again, I shall be able to tell you more definitely what I propose to do for you; but in the meantime I think you ought to keep the matter to yourself. Do you understand me?"

"Indeed I do, Sor," said Mr. O'Leary, getting up, and discovering that either the port-wine or the Doctor's plan had rather confused his head. However, he got the clothes together, thanked the Doctor most profusely, and left.

That night Dr. Daniel went to bed as happy as a man could be, and all night long he dreamed of brilliant receptions, of public meetings, of Queen's drawing-rooms, and more than all of his own great pride and glory in introducing to the world a new Shakspeare.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST TRIAL.

Three days thereafter the Doctor received a letter, and as he opened it an inclosure dropped out. It contained Mr. O'Leary's first experiments in professional verse-writing. The Doctor seized it with avidity, and would have read it forthwith, but, being a methodical man, he placed it on the table, and read the letter first.

Mr. O'Leary was a bad penman; it was with much difficulty that the old gentleman could make out the sense of the rambling lines. But when he did so, he was pleased. O'Leary confessed that he had not the impudence to bring his verses personally to the Doctor. He knew they were worthless. He was ashamed of them; he even fancied he could do better. And then he added something about the condition of the Doctor's coats and trousers.

Here is the first composition, which the Doctor

now proceeded to read, with some necessary alterations in Mr. O'Leary's spelling:—

"The moon was clear, the stars were white,
The wind blew over the sea,
When Mary left her cottage home
To go on board with me.

"Alas! the ship was going fast,
The storm did rage and roar,
And Mary stood upon the deck
And look'd back to the shore.

"The moon was cover'd with the dark,
The wind did blow aloud;
She struck a rock and straight went o'er,
And all on board were drown'd."

"The poetry of the simple and uncultured mind," said the Doctor to himself, "naturally takes the lyrical form. Nations begin with *Chevy Chase* and end with *Hamlet*. In this artless composition the chief feature is its simplicity and directness of phrase. The stars are white; the ship goes fast; the girl, the central figure, stands upon the deck and looks back to the shore. It appears to me that there is genuine poetic sentiment in this very reticence of phrase, and in the stern sincerity and conciseness of the narrative. The professional critic, some disappointed poetaster, would remark, of course, that, '*drown'd*' does not rhyme with '*aloud*;' he would also make merry, doubtless, over

the fact that if all on board were drowned, the narrator, being himself on board, would not have lived to tell the tale. But such is the criticism that stifles genius in its cradle. We cannot expect to have our young poets express themselves according to their inspiration, if we proceed to treat them with a godless banter. What I perceive in this composition of Mr. O'Leary's is a most promising naturalness and simplicity, coupled with a good deal of melody, especially in the first verse. Let us see what he has done with his remaining effort."

Mr. O'Leary's second composition had evidently been written in compliance with a suggestion of the Doctor that a true poet should deal with the actual life around him—that he should tell us what he sees, and put into powerful verse the experiences, fears, and hopes of his fellows. Here it is:—

"'Tis the grey of the evening in Vauxhall Road.
Alas! what sounds do I hear?
A crowd is around the public-house door;
It is a quarrel, I fear.
He is drunk; he doth lift up his hand!
In vain the policeman doth run!
Before he arrives the woman is struck down,
And all the mischief is done!"

The Doctor was not so sure about these lines. They contained, he reasoned with himself, a perfect picture of the scene which the poet had attempted

to describe. But there was a lack of form, of method, of melody, apparent in the lines. They wanted the sweet idyllic charm of the verses describing Mary as she stood on the deck of the ship. But was he not himself responsible for this composition's failure? He had thoughtlessly discoursed to O'Leary about the virtues of realism. He had endeavoured to guide and direct the poetic instinct instead of leaving it free choice. Now the bent of O'Leary's mind was clearly synthetic and romantic; he would not follow in the wake of Crabbe and Wordsworth. Doctor Daniel would omit further consideration of the lines about the Vauxhall Road. He would pin his faith to the charming ballad about Mary.

He sent a message to O'Leary that he wished to see him that evening. When O'Leary entered the study, he was inclined to be at once bashful and nervous; but his patron speedily reassured him.

"You know," said he, with a smile, "you know, Mr. O'Leary, I did not expect you to be able to write poetry all at once. I merely wished to see if you had any leaning that way; and I must honestly say that there is a good deal of promise about the little ballad you sent me. Whether you may develope any very special gift remains to be seen but if you care to make the experiment, I shall be

willing, as I told you, to help you as much as I can. You must read and study the great fountain-heads of poetry; you must have leisure to go about and observe all varieties of men and things; you must have your mind relieved from anxiety in order to receive without dictation the materials for contemplation. I suppose you have few books. Have you read Shakspeare?"

"Is it Shakspeare?" said O'Leary doubtfully. "Well, Sor, 'tis little I know av him in print, but sure I've seen him in the theatre. There's *Macbeth*, now, and the foightin' wi' swords; and as for the *Colleen Bawn*, 'tis a mighty foine piece entirely. Shakspeare, Sor? 'tis little av him I've seen mesilf; but he was a great man annyhow."

"I see I must present you with a copy of his works, Mr. O'Leary. I may say, however, that Shakspeare did not write the *Colleen Bawn*, which is a modern piece, I believe. But first of all I think you ought to begin and study the ballad literature of our country; then you might proceed to Coleridge and Byron, and finally devote yourself to Shakspeare. You should also cultivate a habit of observation during your leisure rambles, not confining yourself to things which interest merely yourself. When you come to read Shakspeare, you will find how strangely he would enter into the

opinions, sentiments, and aspirations of an ambitious monarch, and next minute how he could show himself familiar with the speech and thought of some common-minded peasant or justice of the peace. You must widen your atmosphere. You must forget Pimlico and Vauxhall Bridge Road occasionally. Now, if you had next Saturday free, I would myself go with you to Kew Gardens and Richmond; there you would see beautiful garden scenes and the quiet beauties of the river; while at Richmond you would see some of the grand houses of rich people, and observe something of their ways of living."

"Faix, it's mesilf would be deloighted to go wid ye," said O'Leary, with a rueful expression of face, "for 'tis little I'm doin' now with the shop; but little as it is, Sor—"

"Don't let that stand in your way," the old Doctor said generously. "I'm an old man, and have few claims on me in the way of friendship or benevolence. I told you I would give you an opportunity of rising to something beyond the sewing of clothes, useful and necessary as that occupation is. Now to put your mind at rest for at least this week, Mr. O'Leary, suppose I ask you to accept this little sum. Why, I hope you don't misunderstand me? I believed you rather wished to enter into this project."

O'Leary was neither angry nor indignant; he was simply bewildered. He had received into the palm of his hand five golden sovereigns, and he could only stare at these inmute astonishment.

"Do ye mane it, Sor?" said he, fearing to put them in his pocket.

"Dear, dear me; it is no such great matter!" Dr. Daniel said, smiling at his companion's perplexity. "Put the money in your pocket, Mr. O'Leary. It is Christmas-time, you know, when the giving of little presents is permissible."

"Am I to write anny more poethry, Sor?" said O'Leary, putting the sovereigns in his pocket.

"If you have any impulse that way, I should be glad if you would trust to it. But in any case you will call on me at ten next Saturday morning?"

"That I will, Sor!" said O'Leary, not quite sure but that this was all a dream.

When he got outside, he went to a lamp, and took out the sovereigns. Sovereigns they certainly were; and yet he was puzzled. He went into a public-house and had a glass of ale, in order to have one of the golden coins changed; the man gave him a heap of silver in return. He came out again with a lighter heart.

"Bedad," said he to himself, "and 'tis a poet I am. Me mother knew nothin' about it; me father,

rest his sowl, was accustomed to bate me if ivver I'd a pen in me hand. But what would they say to thim blissed five gowld pieces, and all for a dirthy scrap o' writin'? Oh, 'tis a moighty foine thing to be a poet, an' no mistake. And now 'tis to Biddy I'm goin'; and will she belave it?"

CHAPTER III.

A CONSPIRATOR.

Now there was not anywhere in London a more amiable, simple-minded, and pious young woman than Biddy Flanagan, who was the poet's sweetheart. She was a domestic servant, rather good-looking, with a fair, freckled face, hair nearly as red as her lover's, and a brogue much less pronounced than his. But when O'Leary told this poor girl all the story of his adventure with Dr. Daniel, her quick invention and pathetic hope rather got the better of her conscience. She did not tell her sweetheart that she considered Dr. Daniel a good-natured old maniac, but she acted on that assumption. By this time, be it observed, O'Leary had begun to share in the Doctor's illusions or aspirations. He showed Biddy copies of the verses he had written, for which she professed a great admiration, though she could not read them very accurately. But after O'Leary

had described the Doctor's project, and shown her the four gold sovereigns and the silver, and talked about the holiday at Kew, and so forth, then she gave him, with an artful ingenuousness, her advice.

It was this. Her sweetheart, she faintly hinted, might in time turn out to be a great man, and that would be a fine thing for him at least. As for her, she could not expect him to go out walking with her after he had been to grand houses. On this, of course, O'Leary protested that whatever rank and wealth might fall to his lot, he would never desert the girl who had remained true to him so long and waited so patiently for that better fortune which seemed now to be approaching. Biddy, continuing, gently reminded him that rich people might be fickle in their patronage, and might not care to wait for years to see the end of their projects. O'Leary had written two poems; the result was 5*l*. Would it not be better to continue writing these as rapidly as possible, so that as much ready money as Dr. Daniel might be willing to give could be secured at once? And then, if her sweetheart did care about getting married—

The suggestion was not lost on O'Leary. After all, he reflected, however great were the possibilities of the future, a little money just now and a marriage with his faithful Biddy were far more attractive.

"But divil the bit can I think of anny thing more to write," said her sweetheart. "'Tis a moighty hard thing, the writing of poethry; and that's the truth, Biddy darling."

"Arrah, now," said Biddy impatiently, "what harm would there be in taking a bit here or there, just to keep up the gintleman's spirits, and by-and-by 'tis many a fine bit of poethry you'll give him into the bargain, when it comes aisier to ye."

"There's something in that, Biddy," said O'Leary, not only listening to the tempter, but anxious to find reasons for agreeing with her. "'Tis mesilf that knows that ye can't make a pair of throwsers till ye've learned to thread the needle, and sorra a bit do I know of the making of poethry. But, Biddy, d'ye see, if he was to come on the poethry—"

"What!" cried Biddy, "an ould gintleman like that! 'Tis not a loine of our good ould Irish songs will he know; and 'tis no chating of him, Gearge dear, for you'll make it up to him whin the writing of your own poethry comes in toime. Now there's the *Cruiskeen Lawn*—"

"Get along wid ye, Biddy!" said O'Leary rather angrily; "and is it a fool you'd make av me? Why, the old gentleman has been to all the plays and the theatres, and isn't it out av the ould songs like that that they make the plays? Sure and it's the police-

office I'd foind mesilf in, and not in Kew Gardens at all at all."

"There's manny more," said Biddy shrewdly, not pressing the point.

O'Leary pondered over this suggestion for a day or two. He did not think he would be really imposing on the old gentleman by occasionally quoting a verse from some one else as his own. It was merely borrowing to be repaid back with interest. At some future time, when the writing of poetry had become easier to him, he would confess the true authorship of these verses, get them back, and offer in their stead large and complete poems.

He dressed himself very smartly to call on Dr. Daniel on that Saturday morning. He had even gone the length of getting a tall hat—an ornament which he seldom wore, because the peculiar shape of his head made it almost impossible for him to wear such a hat with safety, especially if the day were windy. The Doctor was glad to see him; the morning was a pleasant one; they both set out in an amiable frame of mind.

In the railway carriage O'Leary took a piece of paper from his pocket. His guilty conscience revealed itself in his forehead—that lofty forehead that had caused the old Doctor to dream dreams. The colour that appeared in his face Dr. Daniel took

to be an evidence of modesty; and is not all true genius modest?

"So you have been busy again," said his Mentor, with a pleased smile. "You must not write as if you wished to gratify me. It is your own future of which I am thinking."

He read the lines, which were these:—

"As charming as Flora
Is beauteous young Norah,
The joy of my heart
And the pride of Kildare!
I ne'er would deceive her,
For sad it would grieve her
To know that I sigh'd
For another less fair."

"Very pretty—very pretty indeed," the Doctor said approvingly, and O'Leary breathed again. "There is much simple melody in the verse; and the ending of it, taking it for granted that any other must be less fair than she, is quaint and effective. Did you say your sweetheart's name was Norah, Mr. O'Leary?"

"Biddy, Sor," said his companion.

"That is not quite so poetical," said the Doctor; and then he continued the reading:—

"Where'er I may be, love,
I'll ne'er forget thee, love,
Though beauties may smile
And try to ensnare;

But ne'er will I ever
My heart from thine sever,
Dear Norah, sweet Norah,
The pride of Kildare!"

"Very good—very good also," said the Doctor; "although there is just a touch of self-conscious vanity—you will excuse me, Mr. O'Leary—in the notion that beauties would endeavour to ensnare the hero of the lines. But perhaps I am wrong. You do not write these lines as the utterance of yourself. The poem, so far as it goes, is dramatic—an impersonation. Now the majority of men, when they are young, are vain enough to believe that beauties do try to ensnare them: hence the sentiment expressed by this person is, I believe, true; and I beg your pardon."

At this point, it must be admitted, O'Leary's conscience was touched. He felt that it was a shame to impose on this good-natured and generous old gentleman. He could almost have thrown himself on his knees on the floor of the carriage, and confessed that he was a scoundrel and a knave.

Some recollection of Biddy, and her pretty, honest, anxious face prevented him. The poor girl had waited patiently for that better luck which never came. The milkman had offered to walk out with her, the postman had offered to marry her this very

Christmas, but she had remained true to the hapless tailor, on whom Fortune seemed resolved to send not the briefest ray of her favour. And now when he saw within his reach a means of bettering himself somewhat, and of releasing her from the bondage of that overcrowded house in Lambeth to give her a couple of rooms—small, indeed, but her own—he tried to stifle that feeble protest of his conscience. He saw Dr. Daniel fold up the paper and put it in his pocket-book; and he knew that the die was at length cast.

All that day the friendly Doctor took his pupil about, showing him how differently different people lived, pointing out the beauties of the grey and wintry landscape, and talking to O'Leary of how he should set about his self-education. In the evening the poet dined with the Doctor, much to the amazement of the old housekeeper, who was indignant, but silent. At night he went away with a whole armful of books.

Next evening he saw Biddy, and he was in a downcast mood.

"Biddy," said he, "'tis moighty afeard I am we are thieving from the good ould gintleman. There is another five pounds to come to me next week; and, bedad, the mate that I'll buy with it'll go near to choking me, it will."

Biddy was for a moment a little frightened; but presently she said,—

"And is it you, Gearge O'Leary, that would be setting yourself up as a better judge of poethry than the ould gintleman, and him a Doctor too? And if it is the poethry he wants, can't ye give him enough of it in times to come, and a good penny-worth over, so there'll be no repentin' of the bargain betune ye? And, indeed, it is not another year, Gearge dear, that I could stop in that house. What with the noine children, and the washin' all day, and the settin' up for the masther till three in the mornin', 'tis me coffin next you'll be for buying, Gearge dear, and not anny wedding-ring."

O'Leary's doubts were banished for the moment, but not destroyed.

CHAPTER IV.

FOREBODINGS.

It must be said for O'Leary that he honestly did his best to requite the Doctor's care. He devoted every minute of his leisure time to that self-education which had been recommended to him; he industriously laboured at the books which had been given him. Somehow or other, however, the big brain behind that splendid forehead would not work. When he tried to understand certain things the Doctor told him, in explanation, a sort of fog appeared to float before his eyes. When he tried to write verses of his own composition, blankness surrounded him. He would sit helplessly by his table for hours, no suggestion of any subject occurring to him. He grew irritable and impatient. The Doctor noticed that his pupil, when they walked out together, had lost much of his old gaiety of spirits. He began to wonder whether tailoring and study

combined were not proving too much for O'Leary's health.

Otherwise all seemed to go well with him. The old Doctor was as much in love with his project as ever, and had grown to take a very keen and personal interest in the affairs of this poor man. Finding out that much of O'Leary's anxiety was apparently connected with the question of his marriage, he suddenly resolved upon setting his friend's mind at rest on that point by an act of exceptional generosity. He told O'Leary that he evidently wanted change of air and scene. When he got married he would have to leave his present humble lodgings. Now what did he think of living a few miles out of London—say about Hammersmith or Barnes—where the Doctor would purchase for him a small cottage, and furnish the same? The walk in of a morning would improve his health, and afford him ample time for thinking. If he would see Biddy Flanagan, and arrange about the marriage, the Doctor would proceed forthwith to seek out and purchase some small cottage.

When he told Biddy of this proposal there were tears in his eyes.

"Biddy," said he, "'tis a jail and not a cottage that I'm fit for. Sure there's not a day I go up to the ould gintleman's house now that I'm not trim-

bling from me head to me foot—with shame, yes, with shame. Biddy, what o'clock is it?"

"'Tis after ten, I belave."

"This very minnit I'll go and tell him what a rogue I've been," O'Leary said, stopping short on the pavement.

The girl looked at him, frightened and silent; but her hand was on his arm, and he did not move. Then she spoke to him. She did not attempt to justify what had been done; she only pleaded that, now it was done, he should wait and accept this cottage—as a loan, not a gift. They would be most economical. She knew how to tend a small kitchen-garden. She would take in washing. O'Leary would save up what he could in the shop, and then by and by he could go to Dr. Daniel, confess his forgeries, and pay the first instalment of the money which he had to refund. Dr. Daniel had already given him 20*l.* in money, besides an immense number of books; they would accept this climax of his generosity, and being installed in the cottage, would work faithfully to pay back the whole.

O'Leary consented, with evil forebodings in his mind, and resumed his imposture. He had almost began to despair of ever being able to do anything himself; he did not even try now; he merely copied a verse or two of one of Moore's songs, and took that

to the Doctor to encourage the old gentleman's hopes. Fortunately Dr. Daniel showed none of these contributions to his friends. They had got vaguely to know that he had recently picked up some odd protégé; but the Doctor was not communicative on the point, wishing to have some finished work of O'Leary's before introducing him to the world.

But each time that the tailor copied out some verses and carried his stolen wares to the house in Brompton, he grew more and more agitated. A feeling of sickness came over him as he rang the bell; when he came away, he felt inclined to walk down to Chelsea Bridge and end his anxieties in the river. The remorse that he felt seemed to be increased by each fresh proof of the old Doctor's generosity, while the fear of detection became almost unbearable. He grew haggard in face. He was peevish and irritable, so that Biddy was almost afraid to speak to him when they went out walking together. At last, one night, he turned and declared to her fiercely, that it was all her fault, and that she had made a thief of him.

The girl burst out crying, and spoke in a wild way of drowning herself. She quitted him abruptly, and walked off in the direction of the bridge.

For some time he gloomily regarded her, uncertain what he should do; then he ran after her and stopped

her. He would do what she wanted. He would say nothing more about the whole affair till they had the cottage. So he gradually pacified her; but from that moment each felt that the mutual confidence which had existed between them had suffered a serious shock, and that at any moment something might occur to sunder it altogether.

So the days and weeks went by. The small cottage was at last got hold of; and so great was the interest of the Doctor in this project, that he sent for his sister to come up from Bath to help him in selecting some pieces of furniture and the necessary saucepans and dishes. Should O'Leary turn out to have the poetical power which the shape of his head promised, might not this little cottage come to be in future times regarded with interest by travellers from all parts of the world?

But the near approach of this marriage, and the prospect of possessing this tiny residence, did not seem greatly to raise the spirits of O'Leary and his betrothed. Biddy now began to look anxious too—anxious and apprehensive, as if she lived in constant dread of something happening. She made fewer appointments with O'Leary; sometimes they walked for an evening together with scarcely a word passing between them. The old delight of their meetings had passed away.

One night he was to have met her, but he did not come—a most unusual circumstance in his case, for he was a dutiful lover. More strangely still, no word of explanation came next morning. All the next day she waited and worried, harassed by a hundred fears; and at last, in the evening, she went to her mistress and begged to be set at liberty for a couple of hours. The request was sulkily granted.

Rapidly indeed did she run across the bridge and up through the gaunt and silent streets of Pimlico. With a beating heart she knocked at the door of O'Leary's lodgings; the landlady, who knew her, came. She had scarcely breath left to ask if Mr. O'Leary was at home. The landlady, a fat, good-natured, shabbily-dressed woman, drew her inside, and motioned her to keep quiet.

"He was took werry ill yesterday, the poor young man, in a fever like, and to-day he has been wandering. There's something on his mind, miss, that is troubling the poor young man—about them books he has, and some money; and law! the way he has been goin' on about you! But I knew as you was sure to come over this hevenin'—and will you go upstairs?"

Biddy followed the landlady up stairs as if she was in a dream. In a bewildered sort of way she saw the door opened before her, and found herself being

taken noiselessly into the small room, which was dimly lit with a solitary candle. In the bed in the corner O'Leary lay, apparently asleep, with a bright flush in his face. He turned round uneasily; he stared at her, but did not recognize her; then he turned away again, muttering something about Dr. Daniel and Chelsea Bridge.

Biddy seemed to recover herself. She went deliberately over to the bed, her face pale and determined, and said,—

"Gearge, me darlin', don't ye know 'tis me? Where's the money? Give me the money; and 'tis every farden av it and every blessed wan o' the books that I'll take back to the Doctor this very minnit. Don't ye hear me, Gearge dear?"

The sick man groped underneath his pillow, and feebly brought out a leather purse. He gave it her, without looking at her, and said,—

"Take it all back, Biddy."

The landlady could not understand the fierce look of determination on the girl's face. Biddy put the purse in her pocket. She gathered up the books from the corner of the room, piled them on the table, and then whipped the table-cover round them, and tied up the ends. With this heavy load on her back she staggered downstairs, and along the narrow passage.

"'Tis the books and the money have brought the fever on him," she was muttering to herself; "wirra, wirra, but 'twas a bad day that he met that ould gintleman, wid his books and his money. And sure, whin I give him them back, 'tis to Father Maloney I'm goin', to tell him that Gearge O'Leary is down wid the fever."

CHAPTER V.

THE DOCTOR'S SISTER.

The Doctor's sister came up from Bath—a thin, precise little woman, with silver-grey curls and shrewd grey eyes. She wanted to know more about this protégé of her brother's, of whom she had vaguely heard. Thereupon the Doctor, forgetting his shyness, grew quite garrulous about his project, described O'Leary's magnificent forehead, told her all that he hoped from it, and said that already he had received ample proofs of the man's poetical leanings. To all this Miss Daniel listened attentively, but silently. When he had finished, she asked him if she might look at some of Mr. O'Leary's pieces.

The Doctor was at first inclined to refuse. It would be unfair to take these compositions as evidence of what O'Leary might hereafter do. But Miss Daniel was so firm in demanding to see some actual work of the new poet's, that her brother at last consented to go and fetch some of it.

She had scarcely begun to read the first of the

pieces, when he observed an extraordinary expression come into her face. She stared at the paper; then a flush of anger appeared on her forehead; finally she looked at himself with something nearer contempt than pity.

"How can you, Maurice," she said to the frightened Doctor, "how can you let people make a fool of you so? Year after year it is always the same—some new craze, and some new impostor taking advantage of you. Last year it was those relics of Sedan: they were no more relics of Sedan than I am. Why, don't you know that this man has been palming off on you verses of Moore's songs—songs that every school-girl knows? Oh yes, your Mr. O'Leary is not a fool; his big forehead can do something for him."

The Doctor would not believe it. He was inclined to be violently angry. Then his sister walked out of the room.

In a few minutes she returned. She had managed to unearth an old copy of "Moore's Irish Melodies," which she had left in the house in days gone by. Without a word she opened the page, put her finger at a certain passage, and placed it before her brother. Doubt was no longer possible. Here was O'Leary's "Oh, believe me, if all those endearing young charms;" there was Moore's version of the same.

Miss Daniel rapidly ran over O'Leary's manuscripts. She could identify nearly all the pieces, though some of them were disguised. The very first of them—that which described Mary standing on the deck of the doomed ship—she declared was stolen from a Scotch song.

It was really some time before the full sense of O'Leary's perfidy was impressed on the good old Doctor. He showed no signs of anger; but he was deeply pained and humiliated. It was not so much that his own pet scheme had fallen through, but that one whom he had tried to benefit should have betrayed him so grossly.

Miss Daniel was of another mind. She demanded to have the man punished. She insisted on the Doctor, although it was nearly ten o'clock, taking her to see this traitorous tailor, so that he might be confronted, and his ingratitude and meanness pointed out to him. She talked of a policeman, and the crime of obtaining money on false pretences, her brother all the while listening in a confused and absent way, as if he did not even yet understand it all.

At this moment Dr. Daniel's housekeeper tapped at the door, opened it, and announced that a young woman called Flanagan wished to see the Doctor, having a message from Mr. O'Leary.

A gleam of virtuous indignation leaped into Miss

Daniel's eyes; she bade the housekeeper show her in at once.

The next moment Biddy Flanagan, still with something of a wild look in her face, entered the room. She did not see that there was any stranger present. She hastily undid the table-cover, placed the heap of books on the table, and counted out beside them eighteen sovereigns; and then she turned to the Doctor.

"Thim's the books, Sor," she said, in an excited way, "and there's the money—all but two of the gould pieces annyhow, and to-morrow you'll have thim too—and sure 'tis the light heart I have in putting thim there. And the cottage, Sor—plaze your honour, we'll have nawthin' to do with the cottage—"

"My good girl, what is all this about? What do you mean?" the Doctor said.

"What do I mane?" Biddy cried, with her lips getting tremulous and her eyes filling with tears, "why, 'tis Gearge O'Leary, Sor; he's down wid the fever; and what has brought the fever on him but the books, and the money, and all the chatin'? And 'twas me that did it, Sor; indeed, it was mesilf, and not him at all; and the poethry, Sor, he brought you, sure 'twas all stolen; and I made him do it, for 'twas the weddin' I was thinkin' of—"

Here Biddy burst out crying; but she quickly recovered herself, and made some wild effort to express her contrition. She had no time to lose. She was going off for Father Maloney. It was the ceaseless anxiety, she explained, about the imposture that had worried her lover into a fever; now she had brought them back, and confessed her fault, she was going to fetch the doctor and the priest.

When she had left, Miss Daniel said to her brother,—

"Will you go and see this poor man?"

"To upbraid him when he is down with a fever?" said the Doctor indignantly.

"No; to relieve his mind by telling him you forgive him. And you have not a great deal to forgive, Maurice. You must have driven the man into deceiving you. Suppose you were to tell him now—or as soon as he can understand you—that you don't wish him to earn that cottage by writing poetry, but that you will give it him as soon as he is well enough to get back to his tailoring; don't you think that would help to get him better?"

It did; and George and Biddy are at this moment installed in the cottage, the latter quite contented that her lover should not have turned out a great poet, and he glad to be relieved from a task which was too much even for his magnificent brain. As for

the old Doctor, he has not given up his faith in phrenology, of course, merely because it apparently failed in one instance. He has still a lingering suspicion that O'Leary has thrown his opportunity away. However, if the world has lost, O'Leary has gained: there is not a happier tailor anywhere.

THE HIGHLANDS OF THE CITY.

THE HIGHLANDS OF THE CITY.

The fairies and good people are all gone away now, and even if any of them were left, the neighbourhood of the London Exchange is about the last place in the world where one would naturally expect to find them. Nevertheless, a worthy couple living in a lane not far from the Mansion House were regularly visited each New Year's Day by an old gentleman who was quite as good as a fairy, because he invariably left a sovereign behind him; and so implicitly did they count on this visit, that on each recurrent Christmas they indulged in a few simple but unwonted luxuries, knowing that the old gentleman's sovereign would pay for these. Not being philosophical persons they did not ask themselves why they ate better food on Christmas Day than on any other day; they were quite content to do as their neighbours did.

The lane in which they lived had in former days

been a place of great commercial repute; but now it had relapsed into dingy offices, restaurants, and billiard-rooms, the last much frequented about mid-day by young gentlemen who were supposed by their superiors or elder partners to be at lunch. John Holloway and his wife and two children occupied the attic floor of one of the tall and narrow buildings; he was a salesman in a boot and shoe shop in Gracechurch-street, and these rooms were at once cheap and handy. Now one New Year's Day, just as he was finishing his mid-day dinner, and preparing to return to the shop, some one came up the wooden staircase and knocked at the door. His wife was looking after the children; he himself answered the summons. He found before him a stout, middle-sized, respectable-looking old gentleman, who, as he presently discovered, spoke with a pronounced Scotch accent. Perhaps it was scarcely the accent that was so Scotch, so much as the grave, earnest manner of utterance which is characteristic of old Scotch people; for, as a matter of fact, the stranger frequently, and apparently unconsciously, used American colloquialisms. It was the matter rather than the manner of his speech which interested and even astounded Holloway. The old gentleman looked about him for a second or two in absolute silence; then he said, in a low, deliberate way—

"You live here? Ay, it is strange. The place is little altered. That is the outlet on to the roof, is it not?"

He looked at a square aperture above his head, a sort of hatchway with a heavy wooden covering.

"Well, yes, it is," said Holloway, regarding the stranger with amazement.

The old Scotchman again stood silent for a second or two, looking round him in an absent way. Then he suddenly seemed to recollect himself.

"My friend, I beg your pardon. I am an old man —I forget sometimes. You were saying that the place had not been altered for years; has the roof been altered? Is the roof still the same? Are the ridges still there? And the red tiles?"

Holloway began to think that the old gentleman was a trifle off his head; but being a good-natured man he answered civilly that as far back as he knew the attics of this old-fashioned building had not been altered, and that the roof was still in ridges, and tiled. Thereupon the old gentleman—whose voice seemed to quaver at times—asked if he might be permitted to go up and out on the roof for a couple of minutes by himself. It would be a great kindness. He would gladly give Holloway a sovereign for his trouble in getting a ladder.

Holloway hesitated. There was no trouble about

it; for the steps were close by; but he began to suspect that all was not right. What could be the object of any one in going out on this dilapidated old roof—on the grey and raw afternoon of a January day—with nothing visible but the backs of a lot of buildings and a bit of the side wall of the Mansion House?

All the same, he looked at the old gentleman. He did not appear to be one likely to be connected with a gang of housebreakers. In any case, what harm could be done in a couple of minutes? He would himself go up and examine the place as soon as the old gentleman had gone.

So he got the steps, removed the wooden covering of the hatchway, and assisted the stranger to ascend. In two or three minutes the old Scotchman came down again; and slipped a sovereign into Holloway's hand without speaking a word, and hurried away.

By this time Holloway ought to have been on his way back to the shop; but, just to make sure that he had done no mischief, he went out and on to the roof. Certainly there was nothing very wonderful to be seen in the slopes of tiles rising on each side to a stack of chimneys. There was no trace of the old gentleman having been there; no rope thrown over to a neighbouring building; no preparation for a burglary. He descended, told his wife of the matter, and

then hurried off to the shop—puzzled, but a sovereign the richer.

Well, year by year this mysterious old Scotchman punctually paid his visit, and Holloway and his wife received their sovereign, and were none the wiser. It is true they gathered several particulars about himself, for he was far from being taciturn; and once or twice, when he had brought the children some small present, he stopped for a little while and talked. He was a Mr. Duncan Macnab, that they knew. They gathered from his conversation that he had been many years abroad, engaged in commerce; that his return to England had taken place just before his first visit to the lane; that he was rich; that he had but few acquaintances, and probably no relatives, for he never spoke of any. But as to the object of this annual visit no reference was ever made by him, and of course they dared not ask. But they talked about it between themselves, Mrs. Holloway being especially curious.

One New Year's Day Mr. Macnab did not arrive at the usual time; and the salesman and his wife began to look grave, for a sovereign which they had spent in anticipation was of consequence to them. Holloway waited a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes, half-an-hour after the time at which he was due at the shop; then he gave up hope, and gloomily

went off to his business. He had not gone five minutes when the old gentleman arrived.

Now if Holloway had been at home, his wife's curiosity would have been kept within bounds; but as it was it overmastered her courtesy, and she resolved to find out at last what this mystery was. No sooner had Mr. Macnab gone out on the roof than she stealthily crept up the steps, listening intently. There was no sound. She ventured to put out her head a little bit, and then she saw that his back was turned to her. She could not resist the temptation to wait and see.

Yet what did she see after all? Here was an old man standing on an old-fashioned tiled roof, and apparently lost in silence and contemplation. Then he took out from his pocket a small bottle and a glass, and she saw that his hand trembled as he filled the glass. And what was it he said—in a low and broken voice,—

"I drink this glass to you, Ben-na-Braren; and to you, Corrie-Cranach; and to you, Ben Lena; and to any that may be alive now and near ye, and to the memory of her that kenned ye all."

He turned his head as he spoke, and she saw that tears were running down his face. At the same moment, too—her curiosity had spell-bound her, and she could not stir—she found him looking at her.

An awful sense of guilt rushed in upon her conscience; and in some wild way she thought of standing her ground, and making an excuse; but the old man's look had nothing in it of anger or vexation at being watched. He merely said, coming forward to her,—

"Take heed, my good woman, that ye do not fall."

"I—I thought—" she stammered, and indeed, as she had no excuse at all, she was forced to save herself from further confusion by simply descending the frail steps. He followed her.

The timid little woman stood before him, with her eyes cast down, as if she expected judgment to be pronounced upon her. He seemed either unaware of her indiscretion or resolved to take no notice of it.

"Where are the children, goodwife? I have some bits of things for them. Guess they don't know much about New Year's Day in this country; but sweetmeats and toys never come wrong."

The children were soon put into possession of these presents, the old man meanwhile regarding them with a strange and wistful look on his face.

"London bairns, ay," he said, apparently to himself. "The cheek white—the arms thin. But I suppose they're used to it, poor things. It is different wi' them that come from the hills—the

London air tells on their cheeks, too—but that is only the first of it—only the first of it."

He roused himself from this reverie.

"Goodwife, when will your husband be home the night?"

"A few minutes after eight, sir."

"Well, tell him I will come down then and see him. I want him to do a bit job for me."

"Very well, sir."

In the evening the old gentleman came at the appointed hour; and then it appeared his errand was to ask Holloway to take charge of a couple of flower boxes which he, Mr. Macnab, proposed to place on the roof which he had visited in the afternoon. Mr. Macnab would send the boxes, have them filled up, and supplied from time to time with such plants as were appropriate to the season; all that Holloway would have to do would be to water the flowers from time to time.

"Yes, sir, I shall be very glad to have the boxes," said he; but he looked rather doubtfully at Mr. Macnab. He could not tell where this mania was to end.

Perhaps something in his tone or look struck the old Scotchman, who immediately said,—

"And I suppose now ye are wondering what concern I have wi' that roof o' yours. Well, it is an old story, and a long story: I thought there was no

one left to care to hear it, until I saw the goodwife's head to-day peeping over the tiles, and then I knew she was curious as the rest of the women. Hoots, goodwife, there wa'nt no harm done—none at all—you go and fetch the supper in like a sensible woman, and I'll tell you the story—and I will take a glass of whisky, if ye do not mind, which I have in my pocket. It is not the first yarn I've spun in this very room, Mr. Holloway; for I was a tenant here thirty years ago. Goodwife, could you give me a drop o' hot watter?"

The story was a simple one enough; but it had its touches both of fun and of pathos; and it was garrulous and good-natured. The old gentleman did not seek to conceal the fact that as a boy his conduct had not been of the best. He was more familiar with the hills and glens—with the haunts of rabbit and blackcock and snipe—in the neighbourhood of the small Highland town in which he was brought up than with the interior of the parish schoolroom. In fact, when he did present himself before the dominie, the introduction to the day's exercises was invariably a couple of "liffies"[1] administered as punishment for his having played

[1] Obviously from *loof*, the palm of the hand. The instrument of castigation is a good thick band of leather, sometimes divided into two tails.

truant. Moreover, Killietown was famous for its herring fleet; and young Macnab being a great favourite with the fishermen, they were always ready to take him off with them when they left before sunset for the night's expedition, bringing him back in the cold grey dawn much more inclined for sleep than for vulgar fractions and the reading of the New Testament. The boy's uncle, a shrewd and patient old Scotchman of the name of Imrie, who kept a shop for the sale of all sorts of ships' stores, and who was responsible for the bringing up of this incorrigible lad, knew not what to do with him. His own daughter, a blue-eyed little lass of eleven or twelve, aided and abetted the ne'er-do-weel as much as she was able, saying nothing about his playing truant, standing by him when he was found out, and sometimes even abandoning her own lessons and domestic duties to join the indolent young rascal in an excursion after blaeberries through the neighbouring glens. Of courset hese two became sweethearts, and young Duncan declared his bold intention of sailing away in one of the King's ships—as soon as he was old enough—and going to the countries that were filled with diamonds and jewels, and fighting and winning a heap of these that so he might come back and make Mary Imrie his wife. And she was quite content to wait.

In the meantime, however, Duncan Macnab was forced to content himself with less ambitious work. His uncle took him away from school and wanted to apprentice him—for the lad was tall and strong for his age—to a blacksmith. That was no use. Duncan took as naturally to the sea as a wild duck that has been reared by the side of a mountain tarn. He was continually with the fishermen. At last his uncle let him have his will. Duncan joined a crew consisting of four brothers who had bought a smack amongst themselves, and then his life as a fisherman began.

So the time went on, and Duncan Macnab and his cousin, Mary Imrie, were growing up. He, indeed, had so far advanced to man's estate that, in the seasons when there was no fishing possible, he had gone to Greenock, hired himself out for a voyage, and come back with money in his pocket. He had not yet fallen in with the King's ship that was to take him to the country of gold and diamonds; but he had found out a way of earning a livelihood, which made him independent of his uncle; and he worked hard, saved what he could, and drank as little as any inhabitant of Killietown could do. For all that, old Peter Imrie would never look upon the lad otherwise than as a wild, harumscarum fellow, who was born to be a trouble to all his friends; and at last, when some neighbour hinted to the old storekeeper that

his daughter and Duncan Macnab were a likely-looking young couple, and when the question was asked whether anything was as yet settled, Mr. Imrie brought matters to a crisis. He told the young man to look out for lodgings in the town, and gave him to understand that he was not to speak to his cousin unless when he was formally invited to the house.

This abrupt and harsh conduct bore its natural fruit. The young people met by stealth, and vowed, with many tears, that nothing on earth should part them. It was the old story told again. In recounting it over his whisky-and-water, in John Holloway's parlour, old Duncan Macnab seemed to be looking at a picture that was far away. The picture was mostly of a wild and stormy night, when the herring fleet had thought it more prudent to remain in shelter—the harbour of Killietown a black expanse, with one or two points of green and red fire where the coasters had hung up their lights—the town visible only as a semicircle of shops, their windows blazing out into the dark—the streets muddy and shining with the rain. Then he could see a young fellow, not heeding the wet very much, pacing up and down in the darkness, and watching from time to time the lighted doorway of one of the shops; then the muffled-up figure of a young girl coming

out; then the hurrying away of these two to the end of the pier, and a brief, hurried, happy interview, notwithstanding the rain and the darkness. But it was quite otherwise on one occasion, when Duncan Macnab came home from the longest voyage he had as yet undertaken. It was in the summer time, for he had got back for the herring fishing; and when he arrived in Killietown he heard that Mary Imrie was staying with a certain Mrs. MacDonald, a relative of hers, who had a farm some few miles inland among the hills. Now, the sailor lad was a great favourite with this Mrs. MacDonald, and he made no scruple about going straight away to the farm, and demanding that he should be allowed to see his cousin. Not only was that favour granted him, but the old Highland woman also bade him rest content at the farm for as long as he liked, seeing that she had but few neighbours, and had seldom a stranger-face to look at. The young sailor remained at Sonachie Farm for seven long, happy summer days.

It was, indeed, a time which these two ever afterwards remembered as the happiest of their life; and there grew up in the girl more especially a sentiment of gratitude even to the inanimate objects around her—to the silent and beautiful glen, called Corrie-Cranach, where she and her lover used to wander; to the mystic solitudes of the great Ben-

na-Braren, where sometimes they could descry a herd of red deer trooping quietly along the mountain-slopes; and to the more accessible Ben Lena, on the other side of the valley, which they oftentimes climbed to get a glimpse of the distant sea. Mrs. Holloway observed that whenever the old Scotchman had to mention the names of these places his eyes filled, and he paused in his speech for a moment.

Well, it was at this farm of Sonachie that these two young people made a solemn compact with each other—to this effect, that if Mr. Imrie would not listen to any reason or persuasion, they two would face the world together on their own account. That is to say, if he would not consent, they would do without his consent; and that was exactly how matters turned out. The old storekeeper said very little when he heard that Duncan Macnab had been up at Sonachie Farm; but he went himself for his daughter and marched her home; and he forbade her to leave the house for one moment without his permission. She did leave it—and for good. One wet and misty morning, Peter Imrie stood looking at a heavy-looking sloop that was just getting out of the harbour on her way to Greenock. He had been offered a share in her by the owners; and he was having a speculative look at her as the

great brown sails got more and more of the wind, and the vessel became more and more dim in the rain. He did not know that both Duncan Macnab and Mary Imrie were on board that boat; though he was speedily apprised of the fact by a letter which he found on his return to the store. He made no fuss about the matter. He got another young lass to keep his accounts; and let his neighbours understand that he did not wish to talk about what had occurred.

Macnab and his sweetheart were married in Greenock; and then the girl wrote to her father, begging his forgiveness (though she honestly declined to say that she was sorry for the step she had taken), and offering, on the part of herself and her husband, to return to Killietown, if her father would meet them on friendly terms. That letter was not answered. Then she wrote to Mrs. MacDonald, begging her to go down to Killietown, and see what could be done. Mrs. MacDonald replied that she had done so; that Mr. Imrie's answer was, that if his daughter returned to Killietown he would leave it; and that it was quite hopeless to try to make him alter his decision.

Now Duncan Macnab was a resolute, enterprising young fellow, and having patiently, out of deference to his wife's wishes, waited to see these negotiations finished, he set about making the best of existing

circumstances. Moreover, the girl, too, showed high courage. She had thrown in her lot with the man whom she most loved in the world; and she was too high-spirited to confess to certain lingering lookings-back. She was not afraid. She only bargained that, until all other resources had been tried, Duncan should not go to sea; for she did not wish to be left alone in a town like Greenock, the size and noise of which bewildered her. To this Duncan replied that, as he had been able to earn a living at sea, he did not doubt he would be able to do so on land.

Good fortune generally comes to those who have the least fear of bad. The young fellow had been only three days in Greenock, making such applications for work as he could, when he ran across the owner of a ship in which he had made two or three voyages, and on this occasion the gentleman in question was accompanied by his brother, the manager of a bank in London. The latter, on hearing Duncan's story, and perhaps a bit impressed by the young fellow's frank face, said he thought he could get him a situation as hall porter to a bank in London, with 1*l.* a week, free rooms at the top of the house, and coals.

"These are the rooms we came to," said the old Scotchman at this point of the story—and there

was a curious, sad smile on his face,—"this was the first house we sat foot in in London."

The young Scotch girl carried her brave spirit up with her to London, resolved to make the best of circumstances, and the circumstances were not bad. Duncan's work was light enough; and he had plenty of leisure in the long evenings for educating himself, which he immediately set to work to do. Then the young wife knew little of the roar and bustle of London; she lived far above it, and it was understood that she should not descend from her Empyrean heights during office hours. Accordingly she set to make a home for herself, not only in the lofty little rooms themselves, but actually on the housetop; and there she had flower-boxes with various flowers in them; and on the quiet summer evenings, when Duncan had closed the heavy doors of the bank and gone up to his wife, that was a pleasant place for them to sit, especially as there was a stone coping to the front wall which insured their safety. And then it was that the girl, laughing at her own folly, began to make this a Highland home for herself; and that ridge of the red roof—that was the giant Ben-na-Braren; and that other ridge—that was her beloved Ben Lena, with the sea, invisible, behind it; and the hollow between, with the flowers down the centre of it—what could

that be but the beautiful, silent glen of Corrie-Cranach? In the gladness of her heart she would laugh and talk to those friends of her youth; and when she read in the afternoon it was as if she were in the still solitude of Corrie-Cranach, until the red sun in the west went down behind the Mansion House, withdrawing the ruddy glow from the ridge of Ben Lena, and then she knew it was time to descend and prepare her husband's supper.

He grew to have as firm a faith in these fancies as herself. On high days and holidays—when the birthday of one of their distant friends came round again, for example—they invariably paid a visit to these Highland solitudes to drink a glass to the health of the absent one. But they had grown to regard the mountains and the glen as personal friends also; and the young wife—laughing, though there were sometimes tears in her eyes—never failed to say, "*And I drink to you, too, Ben-na-Braren; and to you, Ben Lena; and to you, my beautiful Corrie-Cranach; and to all that we know that are near you.*"

Now, during the progress of this story, if story it could be called, Mr. and Mrs. Holloway had noticed that the old Scotchman, who had begun in a jocular and garrulous manner, had grown more and more absent, and his talk had become dis-

connected. He was obviously far more engrossed with these circumstances of his bygone life than with the circumstances around him. At times it almost seemed as if he were speaking to himself. Then he ceased altogether; and his hand was playing rather nervously with the glass before him on the table.

He rose suddenly.

"Well, my friends," he said, with an effort, "that is all the story ye would care to hear. You wanted to know why I come to see ye on the New Year's days. That is it. We were Scotch folk; we drank a glass to our friends on the New Year's day; and when I came back again to England I thought I should like to come and see the old place—"

There was an unusual flush in John Holloway's face. The worthy salesman said, with some abruptness, "I hope, sir, you will come when you please. And there is no need to pay us money for going up above; and as for the boxes—well, you may be sure, sir, we will look after them; and if you will come every week, and every day if you like, to see them, you will be welcome—"

He did not seem to take much heed of this offer; he was looking absently about the apartment.

"I do not remember much now," he said slowly, "about these rooms. They are greatly altered; but

the hills and the glen on the roof—they are much as they were when she and I sate there on the summer afternoons. I can remember them—ay, better than the Ben Lena and the Corrie-Cranach of our younger days, that we never saw again. It is strange I will never see them again—I had no thought I should ever see these again. And I suppose they have built a great house now on the side of Ben-na-Braren; and Killietown, I hear, has become a watering-place wi' hotels in it; and all the old things and the old people are gone. Well, I thank ye, friends. I did not think to find so much remaining of what used to be."

He was about to leave, with his sad, half-suggested story but partly told. Somehow they did not like to ask him questions; he was troubled.

He preceded them to the door, and turned round with a brisker air.

"I wish ye good night. The boxes will be here in a day or two, I guess; and you will pay good heed to them, goodwife—"

"Indeed I will, sir," said the shy little woman hurriedly. "But if I might make so bold, sir—you were speaking of the flowers that the young lady put up there—did she live here long?—"

He paused for a moment.

"She lived in London, in this house, for one year

and two months—and it seemed a short time to both of us. When she was dying, she said she would just like to see, only for once—but indeed there is no more of that story that ye would care to hear. Them that it concerns are all dead now, I suppose, except myself—and I shall not be long in following."

With that he abruptly turned, and disappeared down the narrow staircase. Three days afterwards the flower-boxes came: they were covered over with glass, and had a few spring flowers—from a greenhouse, of course—in them. A few days after that, again, old Macnab called on the Holloways, and had a look at the boxes; he was surprised to find that the flowers had not withered by that time; but as they were evidently going, he said he would send and replace them.

After that he used to call more frequently, and made up for any trouble he might give the Holloways, by bringing or sending them presents, on various excuses. He became very friendly with them, and was blithe and cheerful in conversation; but he never referred again to the story he had told them on that New Year's Night.

This state of affairs continued till May last; and then Mr. Macnab's visits ceased altogether. The Holloways were surprised; they were unconscious of having given him any cause of offence; indeed, how-

ever friendly he might be in his manner, they always treated him with great respect, and they had grown accustomed to his periodical visits. They knew his address; and they would greatly have liked to know merely that he was well; but it was not their place, they considered, to go visiting a gentleman who lived in Connaught Square.

At length, however—somewhere about a month after the old Scotchman's visits had ceased—a tall, grave person called upon the Holloways, and asked them if they had known a Mr. Macnab. They said they had.

"The poor old gentleman," he said, "is dead. He died a few days ago, after lying for a long time in a state of insensibility which followed an apoplectic stroke. You were very well acquainted with him, were you not?"

John Holloway merely said that Mr. Macnab had come to his house several times, and that his wife and himself had been glad to see him.

"Because," said the stranger, "he seems to have had no one about him who was familiar with his ways. He has left his fortune, which is a tolerably large one, to various institutions, with the exception of one small legacy, which falls to you. It is 50*l.* a year. There are no conditions attached; but there is one very odd request made in connexion with the legacy.

It is about that principally I have called in, to see if you understood what the old gentleman meant. He says he does not bind you by this 50*l.* to any service, but he begs of you that, as long as you remain in this house, you will look after certain flower-boxes, and also that on a particular evening, which you know, you should pay a visit to certain strange places—"

The stranger took a piece of paper from his pocket and consulted some memoranda.

"Ben-na-Braren, and Ben Lena, and Corrie-Cranach, which, he says, are in your immediate neighbourhood, and that you should drink a glass '*to the memory of her that knew them.*' This is a very strange request. Do you understand what it all means?"

Apparently Mrs. Holloway did: she was silently crying. As for her husband he said,—

"It was not necessary for the old gentleman to have left us money to do that. We could have done that without any money, I think."

"Well, you rob no one by taking it," continued the stranger. "Will you give me a call in a day or two? This is my name and address."

Since then the Holloways have faithfully attended to the first portion of the old Scotchman's prayer. As regards the second, one may be sure that the

honest salesman will not forget, on the afternoon of the coming New Year's Day, to go up and drink a glass, "*To you, Ben-na-Braren; and to you, Corrie-Cranach; and to you, Ben Lena; and to the memory of her that knew you.*" And if his wife had only some little knowledge of the Highlands, she would doubtless burst into laughter over his pronunciation of the Gaelic names; but perhaps she will not be thinking of laughing at all just then.

THE STRANGE HORSE OF LOCH SUAINABHAL.

THE STRANGE HORSE OF LOCH SUAINABHAL.

The following is a copy of a letter addressed to a lady living in Hyde Park Gardens, London, by Alister-nan-Each, of Borvabost, in the island of Lewis, Hebrides :—

Borvabost, *the 20th of June*, 1875.

Honoured Madam and dear Mistress to command,

You waz writen to Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, that I would tell you the whole story of the Black Horse I sah at Loch Suainabhal; and I am not good at the writen whatever; but I will tell you the story, and I will tell you from the verra beginnin of it the whole story. It waz John the Piper he will go about tellin a foolish tale about me; and it waz many a time I will think of going and breaking his pipes over his head, that he will tell such foolish

lies. There is no man in the island will drink more az John the Piper himself, not one; and so you will not belief his foolish lies if you will be hearin of them, Miss Sheila.

Now the verra beginnin of it waz this, that Dugald MacKillop, that lives by Loch Suainabhal, and his father waz my wife's father's first cousin, ay, and a verra rich man mirover, for he had more az forty pounds or thirty-five pounds in the bank at Styornowa, he will be going away to Portree to marry a young lass there, and Dincan Peterson and me would be for going with him too, and I waz to be the best man. And you will not mind John the Piper's lies, Miss Sheila, for it waz only one gallon of good whisky we took aboard the "Clansman" steamer when we waz going away to Skye—as sure as death it waz only the one gallon that Dincan and me we waz for taking to the young lass's father—but it waz verra wat on board the boat, and verra cold whatever, and what harm is there in a glass of the goot whisky? Sez Dincan Peterson to me, he sez, Alister, there is plenty of goot whisky in Skye, and what for should we keep the whisky? and both me and Dugald MacKillop the two of us both together said he waz a sensible man, and not a foolish man, like John the Piper. And it waz only the one gallon in the char we had on board the steamer.

I will tell you now, honoured Madam, that the wonderful big ship took us quick to Portree, which is a great distance away; but we did not go to bed that night, for there waz two or three waiting for us, and we had a glass mirover and a dance or two. And the next morning we went away to the farm where the young lass waz; and that waz among the hills; and there waz never in the world such rain as there is in Skye. Ay, in the Lews we have the bad weather, and the goot weather; but Gott knows there is no such watter falling anywhere az there is in Skye; but we had a glass and a dance, for the two pipers waz with us; and in the evening of that day there waz a grand supper at the young lass's father's house. And it was not ten gallons of whisky we took in the cart; and Gott knows I will mek John the Piper answer for that some day; but only six gallons; and there waz a goot many people there for a dance and a song. And there waz no one wished to go to bed that night either, for there waz many people in the house, and a good dram and a dance for every one; and the way the two pipers played the pipes that night would hef made a dead man jump in his grafe if he had been dead for two hundred years, ay, or one hundred years mirover. And you will mind, Miss Sheila, that the story about the ten gallons of whisky is only the lies of that

foolish man, John the Piper, who is trunk oftener az any man on the island of Lews.

The next day waz the day of the marrach; and who is there will not tek a glass at the marrach of a young girl? And after the marrach we went away to this house and to that house, and the two pipers playing in the front of us verra fine, and many a dance we had, ay, and the old people too, when they had got a goot tram. And in the evening there waz another peautiful supper; and no less az six and twenty hens, and cocks, and chickens, and rabbits, all boiled together in the boiler for boiling the turnips; and the big barn with more az twelve or sixteen, or more az that of candles; and it waz a peautiful sight. And if the father of the young lass will send to Portree for so many, or so many gallons of whisky, what is that to any one, and to one mirover that waz not there, but will only mek lies about it? I will not interfere with any man's whisky; no, and I would not go and tell foolish lies about it mirover.

There waz one or two of the old people, they will go to bed in the cart that night; and there waz good hay on the ground, and the cart upside down to keep away the rain; but the most of us we waz for no sleepin that night, for a young lass does not get marriet every day. And in the morning Dugald

MacKillop and the young lass they will come out to us; and they would hef us trink their verra goot health before we went in to the fresh herrings, and the milk, and the cakes; and when that waz all over, we had the pipers to the front of us, and we set away for Portree. And who would not trink a glass, when you call at this house and at that house, to let a young lass say good-bye to her friends? And all the way to Portree there waz this one and the other one come out to shake hands with the young lass; and many of them came down to the big steamer to see her away. And as for Dincan Peterson and me, there waz one or two on board of the big steamer that we knew; and we had a glass or two with them whatever, for it waz a verra cold night; but the lies of that foolish man, John the Piper, are more as I can understand. I will not say, Miss Sheila, for it is the whole story I will be telling you, that Dincan Peterson and me we were not verra tired when we got to Styornowa; for it waz five nights or more we waz not in any bed at all; but there waz two or three of our friends will meet us at Styornowa to drink a glass to Dugald MacKillop and the young lass, and who would be thinkin of going to bed then? No, nor waz there any more thinkin of going to bed when we got to the farm of Dugald MacKillop by Loch Suainabhal; for there waz two

or three come to see the young lass he had married; and it was Aleck Cameron, that lives by Uig, he had brought over two gallons of verra goot whisky—or perhaps, Miss Sheila, for I will tell you the whole story that you will see what lies old John the Piper would be for telling—perhaps it waz three gallons. I cannot mind, now; but it waz of no consequence whatever; and to go about speaking of men being trunk that has just drunk a glass or two at a marrach, is no more az foolish and wicket nonsense.

It waz the day after this day that Aleck Cameron he sez to me, "Alister, you hef not been to Uig for many a day; will you go back to Borva by the way of Uig; and we will go together, and we will hef a glass at Uig." And I said to him, "It is a long time, Aleck Cameron, since I will be at Uig, and I will go with you, and we will drink a glass with your father and your mother before I will be going on to Borva." And it waz about fife o'clock in the afternoon when we set out; but Aleck Cameron he is the most quarlsome man in the whole of the Lews; ay, there is no one, not even John Fergus himself, will be so bad in the temper as Aleck Cameron; and what did he know about the Campbelton whisky? I hef been in Isla more as three times or two times myself; and I hef been close by the Lagavulin distillery; and I know that it is the clear watter of the

spring that will mek the Lagavulin whisky just as fine as the new milk. And the bottle I had it waz the verra best of the Lagavulin; and I sez to him, "Aleck Cameron, if you do not like the whisky I hef, you can go back to the farm of Dugald Mac-Killop, and you will get what whisky you like; and you are a verra quarlsome man, Aleck Cameron." And he is a coarse-speakin man, Miss Sheila, and I will not be writen to you the words that he said; but he went away back to the farm whatever; and I kept on the way by myself, without any bread or cheese in my pocket, or anything but the bottle of the Lagavulin whisky. And as for the lies of John the Piper, that he will tell of me all over the island, I will not even speak of them to you, Miss Sheila.

It waz about fife o'clock, or maybe it waz six o'clock, or half-past fife, and not much more dark as if it waz the verra middle of the tay, when I was going along by the side of Loch Suainabhal; and I will put my hand down on the Biple itself, and I will sweer I waz as sober as any man could be. Sober, indeed!—is it to be trunk to trink a glass at a marrach? Ay, and many is the time I hef seen John the Piper himself az trunk that he could not find the way to his mouth for his chanter, and all the people laughin at him, and the wind in the pipes, but the chanter going this way and that way by the side of

his face. It is many a time that I will wonder Mr. Mackenzie will let sich a man go about his house; and for him to speak about any one hafing too much whisky—but I will break his pipes ofer his head some day, az sure as Gott. Now, Miss Sheila, this is the whole story of it; that the watter in the loch waz verra smooth, and there waz some clouds ofer the sky; but everything to be seen as clear as the tay. And I waz going along py myself, and I waz thinkin no harm of any one, not efen of Aleck Cameron, that waz away back at the farm now, when I sah something on the shore of the loch, maybe four hundred yards in front of me, and it waz lying there verra still. And I said to myself, "Alister, you must not be frightened by anything; but it is a stranche place for a horse to be lying upon the stones." And he did not move one way or the other way; and I stopped, and I said to myself, "Alister, it is a stranche thing for a horse to be lying on the stones; and there is many a man in the Lews would be frightened, and would rather go back to Dugald MacKillop's farm; but as for you, Alister, you will just tek a drop of whisky, and you will go forward like a prave lad and see whether it is a horse, for it might be a rock mirover, ay, or a black cow." So I will go on a bit; and the black thing it did not move either this way or that; and if I will tell you

the truth, Miss Sheila, I waz afraid of it, for it waz a verra lonely place, and there waz no one within sight of me, nor any house that you could see. And this waz what I said to myself, that I could not stand there the whole night, and that I will either be going on by the beast, or be going pack to Dugald MacKillop's farm, and there they would not belief a word of it; and Aleck Cameron, he will say I would be for going pack after him and his Campbelton whisky. And I said to myself, "Alister, you are beginning to tremple, you must tek a glass of whisky to steady yourself, and you will go forward and see what the beast is.

It waz at this moment, Miss Sheila, as sure as we hef to die, that I sah it mofe its head, and I said to myself, "Alister, you are afrait of a horse, and is it a black horse that will mek you stand in the middle of the road and tremple?" But I could not understand why a horse will be lying on the stones, which is a stranche thing. And I said to myself, "Is it a seal you will be seeing far away along the shore?" But whoever will hear of a seal in fresh watter; and, mirover, it waz as pig as six seals, or more az that. And I said to myself, "Alister, go forward now, for you will not hef a man like Aleck Cameron laughing at you, and him as ignorant as a child about the Lagavulin whisky."

Now, I will tell you, Miss Sheila, apout the terrable thing that I sah; for it waz no use thinkin about going pack to the farm; and I will go forward along the road, and there waz the bottle in my hand, so that if the beast came near, I could break the bottle on the stones and gife him a fright. But when I had gone on a piece of the road, I stood still, and all the blood seemed to go out of my body, for no mortal man effer sah such a terrable thing. It waz lying on the shore—ay, twelve yards or ten yards from the watter—and it waz looking down to the watter with a head as pig as the head of three horses. There waz no horns or ears on the beast; but there waz eyes bigger as the eyes of three horses; and the black head of it waz covered with scales like a salmon. And I said to myself, "Alister, if you speak, or mofe, you are a dead man; for this ahfu crature is a terrable thing, and with a bound like a teeger he will come down the road." I could not mofe, Miss Sheila; there waz no blood left in my body; and I could not look this way or that for a rock or a bush to hide myself, for I waz afrait that the terrable beast would turn his head. Ay, ay, what I went through then no one can effer tell; when I think of it now I tremple; and yet there are one or two that will belief the foolish lies of John the Piper, that is himself

the verra trunkenest man in all the Island of Lews. It waz a stranche thing, Miss Sheila, that I tried to whesper a prayer, and there waz no prayer would come into my head or to my tongue, and instead of the prayer mirover, there waz something in my throat that waz like to choke me. And I could not tek my eyes from the terrable head of the beast; but now when I hef the time to think of it, I belief the pody of it waz black and shining, but with no hind feet at all, but a tail. But I will not sweer to that whatever; for it is no shame to say that I waz trempling from the crown of my head down to the verra soles of my feet; and I waz watching his head more as the rest of his body, for I did not know when he might turn round and see me standing in the road. Them that sez I sah no such thing, will they tell me how long I stood looking at him?—ay, until the skies was darker over the loch. Gott knows I would hef been glad to hef seen Aleck Cameron then, though he is a verra foolish man; and it waz many a time I will say to myself, when I waz watchin the beast, "Alister, you will neffer come by Loch Suainabhal by yourself again, not if you waz living for two hundred years or fife hundred years." And how will John the Piper tell me that—that I waz able to stand there in the mittle of the road? Is it trunk men that can do that? Is it trunk men that can tell the

next morning, and the morning after that, what they hef seen? But you know, Miss Sheila, that there is no more sober man az me in all the island; and I will not pother you any more with those foolish lies.

And now an ahfu thing happened. I do not know how I am alife to be writen the story to you this day. I waz tellin you, Miss Sheila, that there waz little thought among us of sleepin for five or six nights before; and many of the nights waz verra wat; and I think it might hef been on board of the big steamer that I will get a hoast in my throat. And here, az I waz standin in the road, fearfu to mek the least noise, the koff came into my throat; and I trempled more than effer for fear of the noise. And I struggled; but the koff would come into my throat; and then thinks I, Alister, Gott's will be done; and the noise of the koff frightened me; and at the same time I tropped the bottle on the stones with the fright, and the noise of it—never will I forget the noise of it. And at the same moment the great head of the beast it will turn round; and I could stand up no more; I fell on my knees, and I tried to find the prayer, but it would not come into my head—ay, ay, Miss Sheila, I can remember at this moment the ahfu eyes of the beast as he looked at me, and I said to myself, Alister, you will see Borva no more, and you will go out to the feshen

no more, and you will drink a glass no more with the lads come home from the Caithness feshen.

Then, as the Lord's will be done, the stranche beast he turned his head again, and I sah him go down over the stones, and there waz a great noise of his going over the stones, and I waz just az frightened as if he had come down the road, and my whole body it shook like a reed in the wind. And then, when he had got to the watter, I heard a great splash, and the ahfu beast he threw himself in, and the watter was splashed white apout him, and he went out from the shore, and the last that I sah of the terrable crayture waz the great head of him going down into the loch.

Ay, the last of him that I sah: for there and then, Miss Sheila, I fell back in the road, just like one that will be dead; for it waz more as mortal man could stand, the sight of that terrable beast. It is ferra glad I am there waz no cart coming along the shore that night; for I waz lying like a dead man in the road, and the night it waz verra dark mirover. Ay, and the fright waz not away from me when I cam to my senses again; and that waz near to the break of day; and I was verra cold and wat, for there waz being a good dale of rain in the night. But when I cam to my senses, I began to tremple again, and there waz no whisky left in the bottle, which waz

proken all into small pieces, and I said, "O Lord, help me to rin away from this water, or the stranche beast may come out again." And then it waz I set out to rin, though I waz verra stiff with the cold and wat, and I ran neither up the shores of the loch nor down the shores of the loch, but away from the watter as hard az I could rin, and ofer the moss-land and up to the hulls. It waz ferra bad trafelling, for there waz a great dale of rain fallin in the night, and there waz a great dale of watter in the soft ground, and many waz the time I will go down up to my waist in the holes. But I will tell you this, Honoured Madam, that when a man haz sich a fright on him, it is not any sort of moss-watter will keep him from rinnin; and every time I will stand to get my breath again, I will think I will hear that terrable beast behind me, and it is no shame I hef that I will be so frightened, for there waz no man alife will hef seen sich a beast as that before.

And now I will tell you another stranche thing, Miss Sheila, that I hef said no word of to any one all this time, for I waz knowing verra well they would not belief all the story of that terrable night. And it is this, that when I waz rinnin hard away from the loch, just as if the ahfu beast waz behind me, the fright waz in my head, and in my eyes, and in my ears, and all around me I sah and

heard such stranche things as no mortal man will see and hear before. It waz in the black of the night, Miss Sheila, before the morning cam in, and it waz not one stranche beast, but a hundred and a thousand that waz all around me, and I heard them on the heather, and in the peat-holes, and on the rocks, and I sah them rinnin this way and that by the side of me, and every moment they waz coming closer to me. It was a terrable terrable night, and I waz thinkin of a prayer, but no prayer at all at all would come into my head, and I said to myself, "Alister, it is the tevvle himself will be keeping the prayers out of your head, and it is this night he will hef you tammed for ever and ever. There waz some that waz green, and some that waz brown, and the whole of them they had eyes like the fire itself; and many is the time I will chump away from them, and then I will fall into the holes of the moss, and they will laugh at me, and I will hear them in the darkness of the night. And sometimes I sah them chump from the one hole to the other, and sometimes they were for fleein through the air, and the sound of them waz an ahfu thing to hear, and me without one prayer in my head. Where did I rin to? Ay, Gott knows where I will rin to that terrable night, till there waz no more breath left in my body, and I waz sayin to myself, "Alister, if the tevvle will hef you this night,

it is no help there is for it, and you will see Borva no more, and Styornowa no more, and Uig no more, and you will never again drink a glass with the lads of the *Nighean-dubh.*"

I waz writen all this to you, Miss Sheila, for it is the whole story I will want to tell you; but I will not tell the whole story to the people at Borva, for there are many foolish people at Borva, that will tell lies about any one. And now I know what it waz, all the stranche craytures I sah when I was rinnin ofer the moss—it waz only the fright in my head after I sah that terrable beast. For when I sah a grey light come into the sky, "Alister," sez I to myself, "you must turn round and look at the tevvles that are by you;" and I will tell you, Miss Sheila, that verra soon there waz none of them there at all; and I will stand still and look round, and there waz nothing alife that I could see except myself, and me not much alife whatever. But I said to myself, "Alister, the sight of the ahfu beast at the shore will turn your head, and mek you like a madman; and the stranche craytures you sah on the moss, there waz no sich thing mirover; and it is no more thought of them you must hef." And I said to myself, "Alister, you must clear your head of the fright, and you will say not a word to any one about these strange craytures you sah on the moss; perhaps you

will tell your neighbours about the black horse, for it is a shame that no one will know of that terrable peast; but you will not tell them about the stranche craytures that waz on the moss, for they will be only the fright in your head." But I will tell the whole story to you, Miss Sheila; for you waz writen to Alister Lewis that I will tell you the whole story; and this is the whole story, as sure as death.

And when the grey of the morning waz cam in, I waz safe away from Loch Suainabhal; and a man is glad to hef his life; but apart from being alife, it waz little I had to be thankful for; and when the grey of the mornin waz cam in, I will be near greetin to look at myself, for there waz a grate dale of blood about me, for I had fallen on the side of my head on the bottle in the road, and there waz blood all about my head, and my neck, and my arm, and up to the waist I waz black with the dirt of the moss-land, and I think I could hef wrung a tub full of watter out of my clothes. Gott knows I am speaking the truth, Miss Sheila, when I will tell you I would hef giffen a shellin—ay, or a shellin and a sexpence, for a glass of whisky on that mornin; for I wazna verra sure where I waz, and the watter waz lying deep in the soft land. But sez I to myself, "Alister, you are verra well away whatever from Loch Suainabhal now, and the stranche beast he will not come out in

the daytime; and now you must mek your way back to Dugald MacKillop's farm." And it waz near to echt o'clock, Miss Sheila, when I will find my way back to Dugald MacKillop's farm.

And when I waz going near to the house, I sez to myself, "Alister, do you think you will go now and tell them what you hef seen about the black horse, or will you keep it to yourself, and wait, and tell the minister at Uig? for the men about the house, now they hef been trinking, and they are not as sober az you, and they will mek a joke of it, and will not belief any of it whatever." Well, I waz not verra sure, but I went up by the byre, and I sah one of the young lasses, and when she sah me, she cried out, "Gott pless me, Alister-nan-Each! where hef you been this night? and it is like a madman that you are;" and I sez to her, "Mairi, my lass, if I waz not a sober man, as you know, I would not belief myself what I hef seen this night; and it is enough to hef made any man a madman what I hef seen this night." And she will say to me, "Alister, before you go into the house, I will bring you a pail of watter, and you will wash the blood from your face, and the dirt from your clothes;" and I will say to her, "Mairi, you are a verra goot lass, and you will mek a good wife to Colin MacAlpin when he comes back from Glasgow. Colin MacAlpin," I will say to her, "is a verra

good lad, and he is not a liar, like his Uncle John the Piper; and he does not go about the island telling foolish lies like him." That waz what I will say about John the Piper, Miss Sheila.

And when I will be going up to the house, there waz a great sound of noise, and one or two singing, and the candles inside as if it waz still the middle of the night, and I knew that these foolish men were trinking, and still trinking, and making a verra fine piece of laughing about the marrach of Dugald MacKillop and the young lass from Skye. And I went into the house, and Aleck Cameron he cries out to me, "Gott pless me, Alister-nan-Each! and hef you not gone on to Uig, when you waz having a bottle of Lagavulin whisky with you all the way?" And I sez to him, "Aleck Cameron, it is a verra wise man you are, but you will know not any more of Lagavulin whisky as the children about the house; and I hef seen a strancher thing than Lagavulin whisky, and that is a great black beast that was on the shores of Loch Suainabhal, and you nor no other man ever sah such a thing; and it is the story of that black beast I will tell you now, if you will gife me a glass of whisky, for it is the worst night I hef had since ever I will be born." Ay, Miss Sheila, there waz not one of them will be for laughing any more when I told them all the long story; but

they will say to me, "Alister, it is a stranche thing you hef told us this day, and you will go and tell the minister of it, and Mr. Mackenzie of Borva, and you will hear what they say about it, for there is no one in all the island waz hearing of such a thing before, and it will not be safe for any one to go along by Loch Suainabhal until the truth of it is found out, and who will find out the truth of it like the minister, and Mr. Mackenzie of Borva, that hef been away to many stranche places, and gone further away az Oban, and Greenock—ay, and away to London, too, where the Queen lifes and Sir James himself; and it was a great thing for you to see, Alister, and you will be known to all the island that you hef seen sich a strange thing."

And then I will say to them, "Well, it is time now I waz getting home to Borva, and Gott knows when I will be back at Loch Suainabhal any more, but if you will come along by the shores of the loch, I will show you the place where I sah the beast, and you will know that it is true that I sah the beast." There was one or two were for staying at home until the word was sent to the minister; but the others of them they had a goot tram, and they said, "Alister, if you will be for going by Loch Suainabhal, we will go with you by Loch Suainabhal, and we will tek the gun that Dugald MacKillop's father got out of the

wreck of the French smack, and if there will be any more sign of the big horse, we will fire the gun, and he will run into the watter again, but first of all, Alister, you will tek a glass." And I said to them, "Yes, that is verra well said; and we will tek the gun; but it is not for any more whisky I am, for I am a sober man, and there is no telling what foolish lies they may hef about any one, for there is ofer in Borva that foolish man John the Piper, and every one in the island, and Miss Sheila, too, will know that he is the greatest one for trinking and for the telling of foolish lies of all the people in the whole island of Lews."

Ay, and Aleck Cameron he waz verra brafe now, and he would be for carrying the gun, that had the poother in it, and the flint new sharpened, and the barrel well tied to the stock; but I said to him, "It is verra well for you, Aleck Cameron, to be brafe now, but you waz glad to get back to the farm last night." And he is a verra quarlsome man, Miss Sheila; and he will say before them all, "Alister-nan-Each, I cam back to the house pekass you waz trunk, and I sah no black horse in Loch Suainabhal or out of Loch Suainabhal, and you will do yourself a mischief if you say such things about me, Alister-nan-Each." And I will tell you this, Miss Sheila, that it waz the foolish speech of this man, Aleck

Cameron, that gafe the hint to John the Piper to mek a lying story about it. There is no one more sober as me in the whole island, as you know, Miss Sheila; and as for the trink, it waz only a glass we had at a young lass's marrach; and as for Aleck Cameron and his lies, did not every one see that he could not walk in the middle of the road with the gun ofer his shoulter, but he waz going this way and that, until he fell into the watter by the side of the road, and Dugald MacKillop himself would be for tekking the gun from him, bekass he waz so trunken a man. I hef no patience with a man that will be going about telling lies, whether it is Aleck Cameron or John the Piper.

Well, we waz going down the road, and there as sure as death waz the bits of the bottle that I let slip when the terrable beast turned his head, and it waz many a time we looked at the watter and along the shore, and Peter MacCombie, who is a verra frightened man, keeping to the back of us, for fear of the terrable peast. There waz no sign of him, no, for such stranche cratures, I hef been told, do not like the taylight, but only the afternoon or the evening; and I said to Dugald MacKillop, "Dugald, there is the verra place where he waz lying." And Dugald said, "You hef seen a stranche thing, Alister-nan-

Each; and I hope no other man will see the like of it again, for it is not good to see such stranche craytures, and if I waz you, Alister, it is the minister I would be for telling."

Now, Miss Sheila, that is the whole story of the black beast that I sah, and I waz saying to Alister Lewis, the schoolmaster, "Mr. Lewis, I am not good at the writen, but if it teks me two weeks or a whole week to write the letter, I will tell the story to Miss Sheila, and she will know not to belief the foolish lies of John the Piper." And he will say to me, "Alister, if you will be writen the letter, you will not say anything of Miss Sheila, but you will call Miss Sheila, Mrs. Laffenter, for she is marriet now, as you know, and a verra fine lady in London;" and I will say to him, "Mr. Lewis, you are the schoolmaster, and a verra cleffer young man, but the old way is the good way, and Miss Sheila when she waz in Borva waz as fine a lady as she is now, and as fine a lady as there is any in London, and she will not mind the old way of speaking of her among the people that knew her manys the day before the London people knew her, when she waz a young lass in her father's house." And if there is any fault in it, Honoured Madam, it waz no harm I had in my head when I waz writen to you; and if there is any fault in it, I will ask your

pardon beforehands, and I am verra sorry for it if there will be any offence.

And I am, Honoured Madam,

Your most humble servant to command,

ALISTER-NAN-EACH,

but his own name is Alister Maclean.

P.S.—I waz not telling you, Honoured Madam, of the lies that John the Piper will be speaking about me, for they are verra foolish and of no consequence mirover. But if you will hear of them, you will know, Honoured Madam, that there is no truth in them, but only foolishness, for there is no one in all the island as sober az me, and what I hef seen I hef seen with my own eyes whatever, and there is no one that knows me will pay any heed to the foolish nonsense of John the Piper, *that waz trunk no further ago than the yesterday's mornin.*

A GLANCE AT THE ISLAND OF LEWIS,

WITH SOME ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SKETCHES
TAKEN BY THE AUTHOR.

Here the Evil One fixed his chain when he dragged Lewis away from the Mainland.

A GLANCE AT THE ISLAND OF LEWIS.

We are on the deck of the great steamer "Clansman," which is ploughing its way across the Minch —the rough and rushing northern sea which lies between the mainland of Scotland and the far Hebrides. It is a brilliant July day: there is a blue sky overhead; but there is also a stiff north-easterly breeze blowing, and every minute or two one of the huge green waves dashes against the "Clansman's" bows and sends a shower of salt foam over her white decks. The fierce blowing of the wind, the southward rushing of the sea-green seas, the moving of sharply-defined shadows on the sunlit decks as the big steamer rises on a mighty wave and then plunges forward into the trough—all this gives one a sense of hurrying motion and expectation; and yet, scan the horizon as we may, there is so far no sign of the "stormy Hebrides."

The Greater Minch is not quite twice as broad as the Channel between Dover and Calais. But whoever has been to the island of Lewis knows that ever after it remains in his memory as a strangely remote and inaccessible place. It seems to be further away than Gibraltar, or Newfoundland, or St. Petersburg, or any spot, indeed, that is a familiar geographical expression. Doubtless this fancy arises in part from the exceeding loneliness and desolate grandeur of the scenery on the west coast of Scotland, past which the Stornoway steamer churns its way during two long days and nights. There are some of us on board who have come all the way by steamer from Glasgow —round the rocky Mull of Cantyre, where five tides meet and roar; through the Sound of Islay, and under the gloomy Paps of Jura; catching a glimpse of the mystic Colonsay, where the song of the mermaid is still heard at night, mourning for the chieftain who deceived her; keeping wide of the swirling currents of Corryvreckan—

> "As you pass through Jura's Sound,
> Bend your course by Scarba's shore;
> Shun, oh shun, the gulf profound
> Where Corryvreckan's surges roar—"

until at length the "Clansman" sailed into Oban Bay. There are others of us who boarded her there yesterday morning, and have even now but a misty

recollection of that endless series of great and lonely mountains, of desolate islands set in a restless sea, of long bays and shores where no sign of life was visible but the countless flocks of sea-birds calling and screaming to each other over the breaking waves. Last night, as the sea darkened and the stars began to appear, we sailed under the coast of Skye, and the blackness of the wild Cuchullin Hills seemed to overshadow us. By-and-by, as we can remember, the moonlight rose behind the sharp and jagged peaks, only to render the awful gloom and majesty of them more impressive. This morning, too, did we not see a rosy sunrise flush the smooth waters of Loch Gair and light up the soft green hills around? It was our last look at the mainland. Now we have left calling in at these various ports, and are standing right out to the Minch, far away on the other side of which, and as yet hidden by the white heat of the sun and the white spray of the sea, lie the long, low islands that we seek.

At length a pale blue streak along the horizon becomes visible; as we draw nearer, the outline of bay and hill grows more and more distinct; and finally, the "Clansman" getting into smoother water, we make our way into the spacious harbour of Stornoway. But, at the first look round, is not the stranger just a trifle disappointed? What is there

wild, strange, remote, in this bright and brisk little town, with its substantial stone quays, its white houses, its heaps of herring barrels, and its prevailing odour of fish? Nor is there any appearance of half-starved and half-savage aborigines peering from mud hovels, and talking in an unintelligible tongue. On the contrary, the quays and streets of Stornoway are thronged with a people who are strong and hardy, well clad and prosperous—the men, for the most part, short, stalwart, and thickset, with shaggy beards of light brown; the young women remarkably robust, and in many cases strikingly handsome, with their coal-black hair, their blue eyes with dark eyelashes, their ruddy complexion, and free gait. The costume of both, too, is sufficiently picturesque, the men wearing a sailor-like suit of blue, with a scarlet cap on their head, the young women wearing short and rough petticoats, also of blue homespun, with a scarlet tartan shawl tightly wrapped round their bosom and fastened in at the waist. But what an amazing breadth of chest these young women have! Is it because they are the burden-carriers of the community, carrying in the "creels" strapped on to their backs loads that the men-folk could scarcely lift from the ground? There, for example, goes a strapping wench with her "creel" filled full with large fish-bones. If you ask her what she means to

Stornoway Bay and Harbour, from the Gallows Hill.

do with these bones, she will tell you they are meant for her cows, which cannot be kept quiet at milking-time unless they have a fish-bone to lick. The cows have found out what the girl probably doesn't know, that there are few phosphates in the poor grass of these islands, and thus they make up the deficiency.

On the other side of the harbour lies a semicircle of soft green hills, partially planted with trees, and on a terrace just over the rocks and the water is built Lewis Castle, a large castellated building, the residence of the proprietor of the island. This gentleman belongs to a Sutherlandshire family of the name of Matheson, and is probably, therefore, of Norse descent; but he did not seize hold of Lewis after the fashion of Harald Haarfagr or Jarl Sigurd. It came into his possession by the gentler process of purchase; and, after paying 190,000*l.* for the island, it is believed that he has spent about an equal sum in making roads, improving harbours, and otherwise trying to encourage the industries of the place. For example, near to Stornoway is a small manufactory which he had put up for the purpose of distilling an inflammable oil from peat; and this experiment had so far succeeded that a very clear and good oil could be produced for (I think) about three shillings a gallon, when the immense supplies afforded by the American petroleum springs crushed the project of sending this peat-oil

into the market. Sir James Matheson has also erected some potteries near the same place, which are in every way successful. For the rest, it may be added that, as the proprietor of Lewis is not always resident there, he has intrusted the duty of doing the honours, in his absence, to the "Chamberlain" of the island—an important official, who will show every courtesy to the stranger with proper credentials.

After all, one is glad to get away from herring-boxes, shops, houses, wheelbarrows, and other signs of a busy and thrifty civilization into the interior of the island. We bid good-bye to the robust and vigorous, but gentle-spoken, folk of Stornoway — or Styornoway, as they prefer to call it—and find that an excellent road lies before us through the wild and bleak moorland. Perhaps it is the rapid pace of our capital little pair of horses that is responsible, but scarcely have we got out of Stornoway than we seem to plunge into a strange silence and desolation. Far as the eye can see there is nothing but that undulating wilderness of moor, here and there rising into pale blue hills that seem almost transparent in the distance, here and there dipping down to a hollow, in which lies a silver lake, with a margin of green reeds, but no trees, round its shallow shores. Mile after mile we go through this solitude, with a vague impression that on a gloomier day the picture around

us must be inexpressibly depressing. But, then, as it is, we have a fine fresh breeze blowing about; a blue sky shines overhead; and the sunlight, falling on that dark moor, seems to warm up its deep rich tints of purple, orange, and brown; while the boulders of gneiss glitter like masses of snow.

Occasionally, but at long intervals—for the interior of the island is very sparsely populated—we pass one or two huts, the human life about which is very different from that we saw in Stornoway. Perhaps it is that the stalwart young women are at this season of the year away up at the shielings on the hills tending their flocks, and that where the young women are the young men will be found, whenever there is an excuse for leaving the farm. At all events, the old women and children about these rude hovels are scantily dressed, begrimed with peat-smoke, and altogether a poor and neglected race. The "beehive" hut in which they live has neither window nor chimney; the constant peat-fire does not prevent the damp from soaking into the turf-covered wall—hence all manner of ague and rheumatism. Year by year the family multiplies by birth and marriage, and the same spot of poor land is supposed to support the ever-increasing demand on it. It is this excessive poorness of the land that should make people cautious in condemning the Highland proprietors who

see without concern, or who frankly encourage, a considerable emigration going on from year to year. Where land will grow nothing but rushes—where the free offer of a holding to the son of a crofter who has just got married is only a piece of satire, seeing that all the king's horses and all the king's men could not drain it into cultivation—and where the only possible use of the land is to turn it into a sheep-farm, which demands a large expenditure of money—the peasantry who persist in adhering to their particular bit of half-cultivated farm, while the family members increase year by year, must sink into a proportionately increasing misery. The fact is, they have neither the money nor the patience to drain and cultivate the unproductive morass which covers five-sixths of such an island as Lewis, even if it were presented to them as a gift. On the other hand, there is scarcely any spectacle in modern life so distressing as the departure of a band of emigrants—the old women weeping and wailing, the children frightened, the middle-aged men and women more cheerful, perhaps, but still looking back to the old familiar place. The old folks, indeed, never get reconciled to the change. Even when they see how their children and grandchildren are getting on in the Glasgow workshop or warehouse, when they find that they themselves have good food, warm shelter, and com-

Loch Barvas.

fortable clothing, they still look back with an ineffaceable regret and longing to the old life among the moors, to the damp hovel filled with smoke, to the wet winters, the scanty clothing, the insufficient food, the constant rheumatism, the grumbling over the tyranny of the tacksman and the payment of the *airgiod-ceare*.[1] And they never cease to remind their children of the cruel sacrifice they, the old folks, have had to make in order to satisfy this modern craving for living in big towns.

To return for a moment to the bee-hive hut of these people, which is shown in the accompanying rough sketch of the shores of Loch Barvas. The absence of a chimney is considered a necessity. The hut consists of a thick wall of unmortared stones and turf, rising about six feet from the ground. The roof is constructed of spars of wood, which serve as rafters; and these are thickly covered over with masses of straw, which again has an upper covering of slices of turf. Inside, a peat fire is always burn-

[1] The tacksman is, or was, a sort of middleman, who took the land in large holdings from the proprietor and let it out in smaller holdings to the crofter or peasant farmer. In Lewis, at least, this intervention of the tacksman has been abolished. Tacksman and crofter alike rent direct from the proprietor, but the former has a lease and the latter has not. The *airgiod-ceare*, or hen-money, is a tax of a shilling a year on those who keep fowls. It is probably only a symbol of much more formidable dues remitted. Those who grumble are they who keep but one or two hens.

ing—or, rather, when it is not being used for cooking, smouldering—and the hut is almost always filled with a thick, pungent, and yet fragrant smoke, strong enough to make the eyes smart of the stranger who ventures into the dusky dwelling. Now, it is the object of the occupiers of these hovels to prevent by every means the escape of the smoke, which from day to day goes on slowly saturating the straw of the roof until that is as black as the peat itself. This saturated straw forms an excellent manure for the farm. At the proper time the peasant farmer proceeds to pitchfork the roof off his house, and have it carried away to be distributed over his fields. Hence it is not likely that the efforts to get the Lewis peasants to put chimneys in their huts—at least in the interior of the island, where the sea-tangle does not offer a substitute for the saturated straw—will succeed. Even the business of bribing the peasants to put a window in their huts (each person being allowed half a crown for glass) does not go on rapidly. The wall is exceedingly thick, and is made up of all sorts of loose and heterogeneous materials, in which it is not easy to place the frame-work even of a one-pane window. For the rest, it has been pointed out that these huts of the Lewis peasantry are almost identical with the huts of the Esquimaux.

A drive of sixteen or eighteen miles or so takes us

right across the island, and from the brow of an incline we look down on the small and solitary inn of Garra-na-hiua,[2] on the spacious waters of Loch Roag, that lead out to the open Atlantic beyond, and on a wonderful panorama of mountains, islands, and desolate moor-land. It is at this remote hostelry that the stranger must rest for a few days who would become familiar with the western coast of Lewis; and, once he has become familiar with it, he is not likely to forget the varied picture—the tiny inn, with its patch of green about it, the moist meadows and darker moor-land lying down in the valley, the great Loch Roag, with its margin of yellow sea-weed all along its rocky shores, and the far mountains of Cracabhal, Mealasabhal, and Suainabhal (the termination *bhal* is a corruption of the Norse *fiall*, a mountain), that lie on the south. Nor is he likely to forget that famous fisherman, Neil, a small and swarthy Celt, whose manipulation of a heavy double-handed salmon-rod is a wonder to see. Perhaps it may be his own good fortune to whip the running swirls and spacious pools of the Ainhne Dubh (the Black River), after he has splashed down to its banks through a mile or two of the spongiest morass. Which induces the greater agony of mind, the excitement of having a young grilse, freshly run

[2] *Gearaidh-na'h-Aimhne*—"the cutting of the river."

in from the sea and full of devilment, sulking, rushing, or leaping at the end of his line, or the helpless fashion in which the fisherman must stand and let the clouds of huge "clegs" or horse-flies draw blood from his neck, face, and hands? It is in vain that Neil smites them to death in dozens, while the angler watches with an intense nervousness the next manœuvre of the fish. The summer air seems to be filled with the monsters, the trickling of blood down one's cheek is plainly felt, and it is only when the gleaming grilse is scooped up by the final and dexterous plunge of Neil's landing-net that one begins to feel the lumps that have arisen on one's neck. But is not the play worth the candle? At the inn, in the evening, when the oldest cask is opened and the largest lamp is lit, the story of the capture of that grilse will be told with many a picturesque adornment. For, strange as it may appear, a consignment of champagne may by chance have reached this remote hostelry of Garra-na-hina, and there are circumstances in which the lively little grilse of six pounds or so becomes a leviathan of the deep, until one imagines that such a monster must have turned sideways in order to enter Loch Roag.

We resolve to vary our stay at Garra-na-hina by an exploration of Loch Roag and a visit to the wonders of the Bay of Uig. The sea is of a dark

and ruffled blue; there is a hissing of white water at the bow of the boat; the sun burns hot on the heavy brown sail. What is this beautiful bird that we startle from the lonely shores, with its scarlet beak and feet and its brilliant plumage of black and white? The sea-pyot, one is told. There, on the right, lies the great island of Bernera, presided over by a worthy farmer and fisherman, who is called its King. Here we have the summer heat shimmering over the green pasture-lands of the island, shining on the bays of white sand, and half hiding with a tremulous and transparent mist the mighty peaks and shoulders of the giant Suainabhal. It is across this broad sea-channel that the people of Bernera send their flocks and herds when they seek the mountain pastures of the mainland in the opening of the spring; and strange indeed it must be to see the cattle contentedly swimming across, as if the necessity had become a tradition and instinct with them. Then, too, the young lasses go up to the shielings, and thither, when there is no fishing going on, follow the young fishermen, with their mute love-glances and sighs, and more practical stories of the money they have saved and laid by in the bank at Styornoway. Have they a dance sometimes up at these shielings, when some lad clever with the fiddle gets together his friends and ac-

quaintances for an evening frolic? Alas! the resonant bagpipe, a fit instrument for these lonely wilds, has been tabooed by the Free Kirk ministers, and the chief musical instrument of the island is the plaintive jew's-harp, which is not likely to put too much madness into the dancing.

The songs of these people are sad. They are mostly the stories of drowning at sea and of young women forsaken by their lovers. They are sung in a curious half-recitative fashion, the monotony of which and the sudden intervals of the notes seem to suggest the sharp transitions and the melancholy drone of the bagpipe. Many of them are pathetic enough, like "Dunevegan, oh, Dunevegan!" or that in which the girl sings,—

> "Oh, long on the mountains he tarries, he tarries!
> Why tarries the youth with the bright yellow hair?"

But, indeed, the people are not much given to singing, except when a crew have just come home from Wick, with their pockets well filled and their minds bent on a little jollification. The temperament of the people is sombre, imaginative, and taciturn. They seem to have been cowed into contemplation and silence by the continual and mournful wail of the sea and the memory of resistless storms. They are full of superstitions and gloomy legends. They

The White Sands of the Bay of Uig.

will tell you the name of the man who only the other day saw the black sea-horse on the shores of Loch Suainabhal. They have many mysterious traditions which seem to point to an older serpent worship. In fact, the word *righinn*, which throughout the Highlands means a princess, in the island of Lewis is applied also to a serpent, the modern explanation being that there prevails some legend of the serpent being a princess metamorphosed. They have also many enigmatical sayings, over which a stranger is likely to puzzle himself considerably, with some that are shrewd and practical, which he will understand, as, for instance, "The bad herd's cow is lost seven years before the time."

We run up a little arm of Loch Roag, and land at a place called Mevaig (Miabhag), which consists of two or three stone houses and a Free church. Then we go right inland to cross the neck of the promontory, and our way lies up a vast and lonely valley, the rocky sides of which are sheer as a railway cutting. After a walk of about two miles and a half we find ourselves on the summit of a hill, and right down before us, and out and onward to the high horizon, a wonderful picture appears shining in the mild, clear light of a July day. There is an immense semicircular bay, miles in extent, of pure white sand, which must have been washed up in

former ages. This the sea never covers now, but it sweeps into it in several long curves of shining blue. Landward, and behind the crescent of white sand again, lies a low line of rocky hill, with its thousand rich tints of lichen warm in the sun, and showing all the stronger by contrast with the gleaming sand. Behind that again stretches the far moorland, itself rising into the giant bulk of Mealasabhal, whose pale greys and blues look almost ethereal. We are out at the end of the world, and there is no sign of life here—none but in the circling of a pair of eagles and the rapid passing along the surface of the sea of a string of wild duck. But we are not, when we look at the sea, quite at the end of the world after all; for far out there, where sea and sky meet, a few pale specks in the grey water show where the Seven Hunters jut up from the ocean, remote, unvisited, and haunted for ever by the continual murmur of the Atlantic.

Little Loch Roag is really another arm of the Great Loch Roag, running right inland for half a dozen miles or so. At the head of this long and narrow stretch of water Sir James Matheson has a picturesque little shooting-box; and it is almost worth the while of the stranger to make the voyage thither in order to experience the odd sensation of finding a little stone villa, with a coloured wall-paper in the

dining-room, in the midst of the savage wildness with which he has become familiar. But if there is a calm on the sea that necessitates the hiring of the rowers to row him in a long and heavy boat, if there is no chance of his reaching the lodge before dusk, if he is doubtful about there being anything to eat or drink at his destination, and if the good friends who accompany him resolve to make sure of supper by devoting the time during which he visits the Bay of Uig to buying and boiling a leg of mutton, let him be sure, before starting, that the leg of mutton is boiled. We wrapped that formidable piece of food in the advertisement-sheet of a daily newspaper; we put it into the bottom of the boat, where the salt water speedily cooled it. But when we undid the newspaper at the end of our voyage, we found that we had unveiled the Prophet of Khorassan. I will say no more about that. The keeper in charge of the lodge and his wife, both of them as hospitable people as there are in Lewis, which is saying a good deal, came to our aid, and we were far from being starved. This shooting-lodge is in the neighbourhood of the most mountainous parts of the island, which form the chief deer forests of Lewis. Directly west from it, for example, are the mountains of Cracabhal, Mealasabhal, Zaibhal Tuath, and Tamanaisbhal, which average 1500 feet in height. This part of Lewis,

indeed, more resembles the mountainous Harris, and the scenery is in many places grand and impressive. He who has made a voyage to Stornoway, and had a glimpse from the top of the Gallows Hill of the level moorland of the interior, even he who has driven over to Garra-na-hina or Barvas, may very naturally complain that Lewis is flat and uninteresting—in short, "a peat floating in the Atlantic." But he is likely to alter his opinion if he gets anywhere near the region of Ceann Resort, or by the mountains lying between Loch Langabhat and the sea.

Returning to Garra-na-hina next day, the stranger may probably, in ignorance of the fact that the so-called Druidical stones of Callernish are described and figured in half a dozen antiquarian works, waste half an hour in taking a rough sketch of these strange monuments. Strange, indeed, they are, on this high plateau over the sea, the inexplicable memorials, perhaps, of a race that passed away in silence before history began to speak. What, then, were these long rows of pillars, all of unwrought gneiss, which meet in a common centre, which is also a circle of pillars, with a chief stone sixteen feet high? Do they mark the site of a great Norse victory, or the burial-ground of a Highland chief, or the altar of a heathen priesthood? The natives call

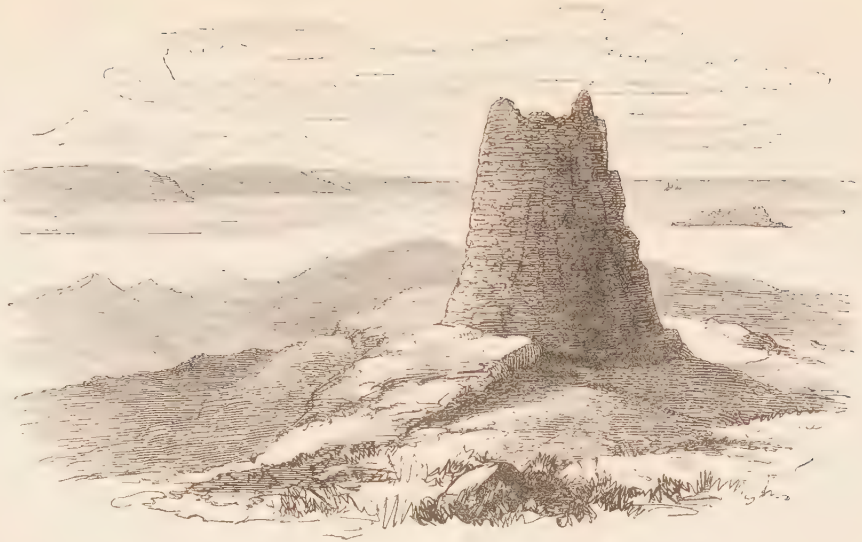
The "Druidical" Stones of Callernish.

them either *Tairsachan*, which signifies the "place of mourning," or *Firbhreige*, which signifies "false men," both of which names, as it has been said, "should be of some interest to antiquaries, for they will suit pretty nearly any theory." The Callernish stones are said to be the finest of these monuments in Britain; they are certainly more complete and striking than any group on the wide plain of Carnac, in Brittany; while even he who has the least antiquarian interest in them must be impressed by the appearance of these weather-worn and hoary pillars on this lonely plateau overlooking the Atlantic waves. There are in all forty-eight stones, the circle is forty-two feet in diameter, and the approaches to it form a species of cross.

In due course of time our stout and serviceable waggonette carries us away from Garra-na-hina on a northward pilgrimage, and by and by we come in sight of another antiquarian relic. Fronting the sea, and standing high over a number of soft green valleys, is one of those round towers which seem to turn up in pretty nearly all countries for the express purpose of provoking dissent among archæologists. Dune Carloway (Dun Charlobhaidh), whether a relic of Buddhist symbolism, or a Pictish fort, or the mere stronghold of one of the Norse sea-rovers, like Olaf Tryggveson, is one of the best preserved of its class,

and still shows the curious staircase between its double walls. These walls are devoid of mortar or any substitute for mortar, yet their thickness has enabled them to withstand the western gales for centuries, the number of which is ever in dispute. Dune Carloway tapers considerably as it rises from its broad base, while one side has broken down into a heap of loose stones, which the peasantry—just as their brethren of Carnac use the multitude of "Druidical" stones there—employ as a sort of ready-made quarry.

The drive from Garra-na-hina to Barvas on a bright and pleasant July day is one of the most delightful imaginable. The road follows pretty closely the deeply indented and picturesque coast, consequently the west or south-west wind blows keenly in from the sea to temper the heat. From time to time one passes small fresh-water lochs, set like silver among the green of the rushes, and hither for a change come all manner of wild fowl that have grown tired of sea-flights to wash their plumage in the clear ripples. Barvas, when one gets to it, is a lonely little place, consisting of a small temperance inn, a few huts, a school, and a Free church. A small river runs by it into Loch Barvas, which is close to the sea-shore, where the fishermen have built one or two of the bee-hive dwellings. Indeed, it is a com-



Dune Carloway.

mon thing for a fisherman to be also a small farmer, the work of the farm being carried on by the other members of his family when he is away at the fishing. All along the shore at this point one finds heaps of ling that are being salted and pickled for exportation, this being the chief local fishery since the herring-fishers got into the habit of going away every year to Caithness.

Another morning finds us making our way up to the Butt of Lewis, the extreme point of the island; and the further north we go the more distinct become the traces of the early Norwegian occupation of Lewis, both in the names of the hamlets, and in the appearance of the people. The termination "bost" (an inhabited place) now becomes common. The fishermen, more especially those of Ness, seem quite a different race from those we saw in Stornoway. They are taller, fairer, and less melancholy of visage. They are an industrious and hard-working race, the Ness fishermen. Many of them own the boats they go out in, and the sums they get during a good season are considerable. The curing-houses of the village are quite a busy sight, and sometimes you may find there the skin of one or two seals that have just been shot somewhere about the shore. Two miles further on we come to the Butt. At this point the coast of Lewis is inex-

pressibly wild, marked by sheer precipices and isolated pinnacles of rock, round which the fairest summer sea roars with a ceaseless noise. High perched as is the tall lighthouse on the summit of the cliffs, the winter storms dash their foam right over the top of the white stone tower. But even here, at the very end of the world, as it were, we find the traditions of Lewis hospitality faithfully preserved, the lighthouse keeper and his wife entertaining their chance guests in a right royal fashion. Was it not he, too, who told us that legend of the hole in the neighbouring rocks, shown in an accompanying sketch, having been used by the devil to drag away Lewis and Harris from the mainland, when once that famous personage had got a sufficient chain passed through the rock in question?

Well, these are but a few rough notes on some of the features of Lewis and its people, such as might be suggested to a stranger rapidly passing through the island. Further and more affectionate study of both would doubtless be impossible to the holiday traveller, who might be bound, perhaps, not to occupy at the moment too much of the time which his good friends who are resident in the island may be able to place at his disposal. And yet a final word or two of loving admiration and remembrance must be said about the wonderful beauty of the

The Butt of Lewis.

northern nights in that distant and enchanted kingdom by the sea. Who that has seen can ever forget the dying out of the blood-red sunset over Loch Roag, and the appearance in the heavens, as the night deepened, of a strange metallic glow, fine and pale and luminous, in which the majestic shoulders and peaks of Suainabhal and Mealasabhal grew mystic and remote? And then what was that even to the appearance of a new and richer light behind the mountains, when into the wonderful violet sky the yellow moon rose slowly and solemnly, sending its first glittering bars of gold down on the ripples of the lake? The mountains came nearer as their shadows grew sombre under the soft light of the moon; the white sands showed along the coast; the hull of the small boat on the moving water was black as jet. These were magical nights, with the murmur of the waves all round the moonlit shores, and the scent of the sea in the cool night air. There are some who say that Lewis is a mournful and desolate island, set amidst grey seas, hidden by rain and the cold winter mists. That may be so; but there are others who will never think of it but as under the inexpressible glamour of these silent summer nights, when the sea and the sky and the moonlit hills seemed to belong to an enchanted world, and merely to live was to breathe the air of romance.

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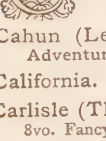

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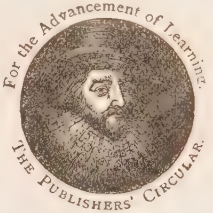

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